NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

THE
North American Review

ISSN 0029-2397 FALL 1976 $1.50

DETAIL OF TWIG - VERY SLIGHTLY ENLARGED -

SEPT. 10, '55 CAMP DENALI, KANTISHNA AREA, ALASKA - BLACK BEAR FEEDING IN BERRY BUSHES JUST ABOVE TREE LINE, ON RIDGE N OF CAMP - SPENT SEVERAL HOURS FORAGING; CLIMBED TO BARE, GRAVELLY KNOLL TO TAKE SHORT MID-MORNING SIESTA - (LIFE)

AN ALASKAN SKETCHBOOK
Drawings by William D. Berry

THE WOMANLY ART OF FICTION
Eleven Short Stories

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wild Should Wild Remain.

"Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in."

ALDO LEOPOLD

"Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man apart from that...."

ROBINSON JEFFERS

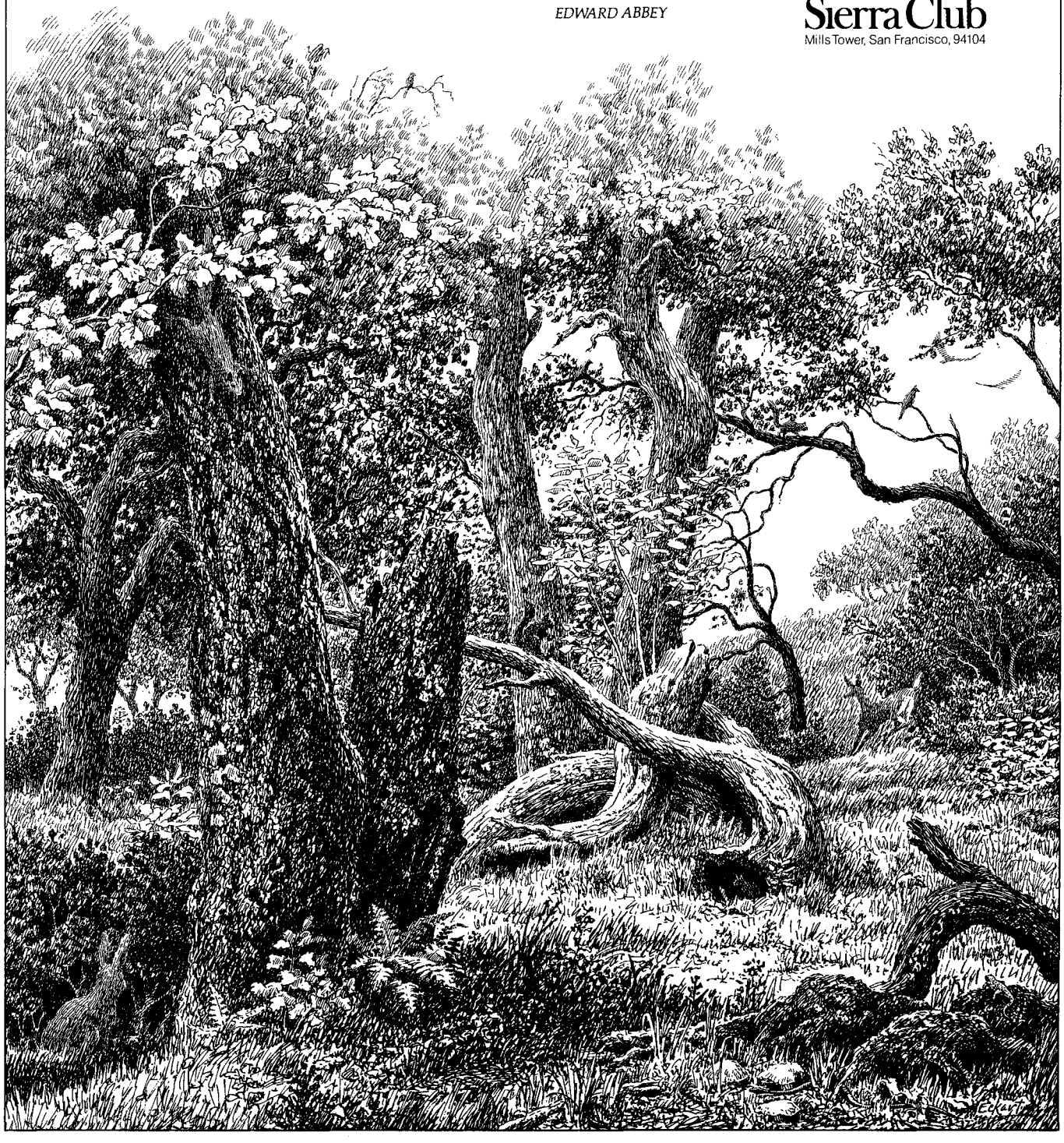
"The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, (the earth which bore us and sustains us), the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need—if only we had the eyes to see."

EDWARD ABBEY

"We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds...It is important to us...simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as an idea."

WALLACE STEGNER

Sierra Club
Mills Tower, San Francisco, 94104



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

FOUNDED IN 1815

Vol. 261/No. 3/Fall 1976

The North American Review

FEATURES

9 West Bradford Celebrates Massacre, *by W. J. Holinger*

64 A Time of Change, *drawings from an Alaskan Sketchbook by William D. Berry*

THE WOMANLY ART OF FICTION

12 Coming About, *by Mary Peterson*
16 The Black Daffodil, *by Ruth Goldsmith*
17 The Crystal Palace, *by Jocelyn Siler*
19 Twenty-Ten, *by Sally George*
20 Heat Haze, *by Linda Ashour*
22 The Magic Unbecoming Blouse, and The Cat That Had the Power of Speech, *by Marian Ury*
25 Bare Trees, *by Elizabeth Anton*
30 The Disappearance, *by Rae-Jolene Smith*
33 Chiaroscuro, *by Margaret Goggin*
39 American Gothic, *by Carol Adorjan*

OTHER FICTION

58 The Flight of Hailstones, *by David Long*

82 Theorem Based on Tuesday's Search, *by Eric Chaet*

THE MANLY ART OF POETRY

10 The Girls Go By, Sweet, *by John Ditsky*
24 How to Survive Heaven, *by Daniel Mark Epstein*
29 Harboring Criminals, *by Peter Wild*
40 Obbligato, *by William Logan*
42 Knockout, *by John Skoyles*
44 Two Poems, *by Frederic Will*
46 Great Expectations: Orphans on Trip Day, *by William Hathaway*
47 January's End, *by Albert Salsich*
48 The Happy Poem, *by Thomas Brush*
49 Ceremony on a Summer Evening, *by Mark Halliday*
50 Dinner, *by Larry Lanier*
51 Letting Go in the Middle of the Night, *by Michael Allen*
52 The Swimmer, *by Philip Pierson*
53 Late Afternoon, *by Stephen Dobyns*
54 Getting Ready for Snow, *by Dan Masterson*
55 Recording Recording, *by Jim Hall*
56 At the Concert, *by James Moore*
57 What Could be Silence, *by Joeffrey Bartman*
80 The Short Pump Blues, *by Dabney Stuart*
92 The New Realism, *by Jack Myers*

DEPARTMENTS

4 . . . Another Man's Poison: UNIONS, TREES, WASHINGTON, INDIA, & HALF A DIALOGUE WITH RICHARD DIEBENKORN, *by Kenneth Lash*
6 American Eye: BICENTENNIAL FOLIE, *by Diane McWhorter*
85 Books & Authors: RESPECT FOR THE DEAD, *by Robert F. Gish;* THE MUSE OF SF, *by Thomas J. Remington;* SHORTER NOTICES
90 Synecdoche: BRIEF POETRY NOTICES
93 Film: FESTIVAL, *Lawrence Sturhahn*

Editorial and Business offices: UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA, CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
Rates: $1.50 A COPY: $6.00 A YEAR IN THE U.S. AND ITS POSSESSIONS, $6.15 IN CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA—ALL OTHER COUNTRIES $7.00 A YEAR.

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, Fall 1976, Vol. 261, No. 3. Published quarterly in March, June, September, December, at the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Second Class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright © 1976 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed envelope with return postage. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in Social Sciences and Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Historical Abstracts, and the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature. Back file volumes are available from AMS Reprint Company, 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003, and from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U. S. and Canadian national newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10011.

Editor	ROBLEY WILSON, JR.
Poetry	PETER COOLEY
Environment	JOSEPH W. MEEKER
Contributing Editors	ROY BEHRENS, RICHARD BROOK, LEO J. HERTZEL, KENNETH LASH, JOHN LINDBERG, STEPHEN MINOT, NORA L. MAGID, WILLIAM K. WOODS
Business Manager	CHARLOTTE L. WILSON

CREDITS: Cover, *William D. Berry;* 9, *Gerald Wise;* 11, 43-57, 81, *Debbie Deschner;* 58-63, 82-84, *James Buckels;* 93-95, *Lawrence Sturhahn.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kenneth Lash

Unions
Trees
Washington
India
and Half a Dialogue with Richard Diebenkorn

Life and its names, cont.: Note is hereby taken that the great young sprinter Houston McTear has recently been defeated by Harvey Glance.

* * *

Thousands—maybe even hundreds—of letters have been pouring in asking what I have against unions. Well, it's a matter of arrested development. Theirs. A swell fellow like me certainly wouldn't be against the early unions that were fighting Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller—all those philanthropists. But most unions don't seem to have budged a brain since then. Workers have changed, work problems have changed, more Americans are exploited psychologically than physically, but the unions go on in their fedoras, running a protection racket. And they're allergic to questions of quality, because quality means difference and difference means squabbling and squabbling leads to poor discipline and sinus headaches. So they thumb down radical ideas like profit-sharing. Leonard Woodcock, president of the United Auto Workers, recently expressed his considered opinion on profit-sharing. He was against it because it might result in some auto workers getting more money than others; e.g., I might share in General Motors' profits, you might share American Motors'. Presumably then the essential union concern is neither personal commitment nor pay, but "equality." And George Meany hates communists?

* * *

I read beneath my column in Summer *NAR* a letter to the editor. It was in response to an *NAR* piece on traveling in India. The article said that India was no doubt grand but poor and smelly. The letter-in-response said if you don't like it there, go back where you came from. I wish them ill luck of their argument, as I do all those who oom and ah over the glories of India, its tranquility, its knowledge of the secrets of inner peace. India's ageless trade secret was to compound in the name of religion the most elaborated excuse in history for the daily miseries of its population, to create for the sake of a public convenience the filthy concept of a human being who is literally untouchable. And they would teach us spirituality, this people for whom the only recourse was to sink inwards, to retreat as far as possible from the realities of life in their world, melting to insubstantiality on a mountain top, or sprawled under a wall dreaming of a houri'd hereafter. If India is a modern culture hero to some it owes not to any possession of peace but to long practice in the arts of hallucination.

* * *

Life's better moments: reading E. L. Doctorow's imaginary encounter (in the novel *Ragtime*) between Henry Ford and J. P. Morgan. A joyous rendering of Kook clucks.

* * *

Far be it from me to pick on "Washington." I'm not running for anything. Just the same it's very hard not to talk about "best laid plans." But in the grander, more great-viewed scope of the social philosopher and occasional feminist, I cannot but applaud our capital's becoming a new literary center, as well as a model for experimental successes in job enrichment. Random House (not a brothel) may be opening a Washington office; Simon and Schuster may consider a dual appointment in Health, Education, and Welfare. I am told that Paris is pink with envy. Well, we were bound to come of age. Finally we are a nation of writers and readers.

* * *

I talk with trees because along with water I like them best among created things. Maine is jampacked with pine, spruce, maple, birch, hemlock—often overpopulated, so you have to grow fast and reach sunlight before it's too late. Thus most of the trees are skinny. I stopped to chat a few minutes with a gray-complected birch, thinking perhaps a wry, Maine-like observation might cheer things up.

"You aren't exactly a stunner," I said, "but I hear tell that only God can make you."

The tree shivered. "The bad pen is mightier than the axe," he said.

"Speaking of axes," I said, "the Bangor paper keeps talking about the high price of heating oil and a hundred thousand square miles of native timber—in the same column."

"Maine is poor," he said.

"And there's always a victim somewhere," I said.

"So I understand," he said (wryly).

I laughed. "Yes," I said. "For instance, I have some land—all trees, by the way—on a hillside not far from the ocean in northern California. The state is a pretty strange place to begin with and now they've got this young governor brought back from the Middle Ages so he sounds all fresh and new—"

"Where are the Middle Ages?" he said.

"Long gone," I said. "It was a time when only God could make *anything*. There weren't machines yet, you see. I think they used square wheels, low expectation being held a great virtue at the time."

The tree did not smile. "You were saying?" he said.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes," I said, "about California and land and trees and victims. Well, they decided they were going to conserve things and there wasn't anything left to conserve except up north (the tree nodded), but they started in on that, passing laws, and you know how laws are, they breed like fruit flies, so one day I got a notice telling me I couldn't build anything on my land, even to live in, without their permission, and if I got their permission I'd also have to get their OK on how many windows the house could have—"

"How many *windows*?" the tree said.

"Yep," I said.

"You're a worthwhile storyteller," he said, laughing.

"Ain't it the truth," I said.

* * *

Leisure: On a Sunday afternoon in a one-street town in Iowa there were two people and one dog walking, no store open, the trucks still, standing where the street ended at the grain elevator. The two people went into a house, the dog went off into a field. Nothing stirred. Then an old Chevy coupe, hind-end lifted, came sputtering down the street, a teen-kid at the wheel. He reached the end, turned. Sputtered back. Turned, returned, alone up and down the street. Suddenly his mating call was answered. A battered Ford with Big Daddy muffler appeared. They gunned engines, farting happily at each other, then slowly wove up the street together, curving, circling. Reached the end and came back, curving, circling. Turned. . . .

Dr. David Whitsett tells of an occasion he had to talk with some inmates at a prison. What's the single worst thing about prison life? he asked. "Nothing to do," they said.

* * *

I have been thinking about this column, about whether or not to continue doing it. The personal quality grows discomforting. Since its inception the column appears to have consisted of moments of anger and whimsy surrounded by minutes of essay. It is not the moments of indulgence that make it personal, but rather the nature of the essay as a literary form.

The roots of the essay lie in a deep delight with "I think, therefore I am." In the act of writing, a first extension appears: "This is what I think, therefore this is what I am." The "familiar" essay—an accurate piece of terminology. But a second extension may follow: "This is *how* I think, as I try my thinking on this and that and the other." The effect accumulates.

Essay, of course, means to try. I don't know—and at present am too far from libraries to discover—whether in the history of literature the term was first used by Montaigne, but I have become profoundly aware of what the term means, of what is being tried in the essay: *to discern*.

I have no memory of Montaigne's offering any nutshell formula whatever,

let alone that one, but nonetheless it's what his *Essais* consisted in—marvelously clean and perseverant attempts to discern. . . to distinguish the shape of personal views so private that they were unclear even to the possessor of them—himself. He sets out, deliberately and with all consciousness, on a voyage of discovery. And the goal may seem to be "truth," but in the doing turns out to be. . . the doing. One discovers The New World as a by-product of the need to explore. One lands with one's feet, temporarily; one's belief remains on board . . . quietly celebrating for a few moments the process, and making ready for the next try.

In this way of seeing, one "arrives" nowhere, neither at truth nor money (the only generally-accepted destinations). One arrives at a stone in a series of stones across an infinite brook. Each arrival makes possible the further try. So there is always a sense of progress, never a sense of completion.

The essay is generally beyond knowledge, but just short of wisdom. It often feels like wisdom because it can make clear a process through which wisdom is arrived at. This kind of "making clear" —not the easier apparency of "truth" —is the source of beauty when it appears in an essay.

Edward Hoagland, in a piece for *The New York Times*, posits that the order of the personal essay is that of "the mind's natural flow"—as against a "systematized outline of ideas." Yes. System has to do with what we humans call "truth." Facts arranged toward a conclusion. Fixed like stars. Only interpretation of the cosmos changes; the stars of "truth" are as difficult to dispose of as nuclear waste. There is something dead yet furiously active about a conclusion—do you know what I mean? It gets buried in the popular consciousness and right away maggots start up into the language. "There is but one God and His name is _____." "Right is might." Two plus two is four." "The phallus is no joke." By the time people get around to knowing things, they aren't thought any more, they're symbols.

It is possible to believe that wisdom exists in crystalline completion, outside of this life. We presumably catch an occasional glimpse of it as we swing by in our fitful orbit. If so, this purity is clearly no concern of mine. But if there is a human wisdom, it must share the essential condition of human existence, i.e., flow. Human wisdom is likely to be a process.

"Answer" is a product—finite, yet generalized. Process is infinitely particular. Tom Wolfe vs. Thomas Wolfe, perhaps. In a mere title (*You Can't Go Home Again*) Thomas Wolfe caught a piece of wisdom; 100,000 words later he was still trying to understand how he came to know it, and what might be the meaning of this meaning. I am told that he never found out. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Diane McWhorter

Bicentennial Folie

Outside it was the Fourth of July. By noon, the multitudes were flocking past my window to a strip of grass next to the Charles River, where at 8:30 p.m. Arthur Fiedler would conduct the Boston Pops through patriotic crescendo after crescendo. *Time* Magazine was billing it as "New England's most grandiose event." I sat diffident in my studio three blocks away. At around two I might venture out for a newspaper, the front page of which I would disengage and put away for my grandchildren. And maybe at 8:30 or so, I would wander down to the River to gather for the progeny more experience worthy of anecdote.

Ancestral duty had to have been a powerful motivation, for I was reluctant to leave my apartment. During the past month, a fantasy had beset me: I am walking down the street, a car drives by, a gun appears at the window, and I have been sniped. I don't dwell on this scene, or invent Machiavellian variations of it; it just flashes through my mind like some false epiphany and disappears. Acquaintances have ascribed these visions, as they do any erratic behavior on my part, to my southern heritage and dismiss them as gothic: there are no snipers in New England, they say. Certain moral compeers of mine, however, are having similar *crises de mortalité*—one is gunned down as he inspects the plants in his living room, like Jesse James hit from behind while straightening a picture on his parlor wall, and the other is picked off by a pedestrian he passes in his car. I like to think that these imagined ambushes are metaphorical, that they have some connection with our nation's birthday. As any student of folklore knows, birthdays are extremely unstable periods of transition, during which time the celebrant's body is in danger of being taken over by evil spirits. Birthday parties were designed to protect the vulnerable one from the fiends with a shield of well-wishers. Maybe my assassins were members of the very gang that was going to do in the Bicentennial—if the birthday parties weren't good enough.

Staccatos of firecrackers were beginning to sound. In about an hour Mr. Fiedler would jab his baton into the first note of the *1812 Overture*. Twelve thousand aerial shells would explode; eight steeple bells would ring; six 105-mm howitzers would be fired, and two hundred titanium salutes would light up the firmament. It all seemed tailored to recapture not the signing of the Declaration ofIndependence, but the day a year or so earlier when aristocrats had turned out with picnics to watch the Battle of Bunker Hill. (On the evening of July 3, some friends and I, feeling that my own delusions lacked a certain panache, not to mention relevance, concocted some suitably military holocaustic fantasies: At the climax of the *1812 Overture*, an unsuccessful Albanian restaurateur leaps upon one of the howitzers, which he has loaded with real ammunition, aims it into the crowd and lets her rip; or a *kamikaze*, who has been looking for an appropriate target since 1944, wings out of the fireworks at the finale and nose-dives into the audience.)

I arrived at the Esplanade on the Charles at around nine, in time for a medley of patriotic songs; poked around the bodies covering the grass, expressway, overpasses; found a clean stoop to sit on a half mile away from the concert; twitched my shoulders to the beat of the *1812*; flinched no more at the booming howitzers than at the firecrackers some high school girls were setting off a little way down the road. After the last Roman candle had detonated, I repaired to the Hillbilly Ranch, next to the Trailways bus station, drank a beer, danced to a few country-western tunes, then called it a night, called it a bicentenary.

* * *

The only Independence Day mishap occurred when several patriots inhaled carbon monoxide fumes while waiting to get out of the Boston Common underground garage. But even if the jubilee had been less than cataclysmic, my bugbear snipers were figments of neither caprice nor dementia. There was good, tangible cause for a little hysteria. For the past year natives had suffered a soiled mattress while the Cradle of Liberty was having its linen changed. The Common had been rendered uncrossable by diggers and drillers dispatched by sbme city functionary who had a thing for stone borders on sidewalks. Likewise the famed Freedom Trail was being spruced up, and though few denizens spend their Saturdays inhaling the vapors of democracy issuing from Patrick Henry's grave or Paul Revere's house (though they might stop at the latter just to see the effects of the bomb that blew up next door), historic landmarks are just as conspicuous on the consumer's route as they are on the tourist's; we've had to negotiate elaborate contrivances of detours, covered walkways and makeshift bridges just in the course of getting our groceries. Tourbus exhaust asphyxiates us. Hucksters assault us with papier-mâché replicas of the U.S.S. *Constitution*. Tourists turn us into cartographers.

* * *

Violence slinks alongside these cosmetic inconveniences. The Bicentennial brand has been manufactured in part by the Boston Liberation Army, an amorphous crew that claimed responsibility for the fire on the Boston Tea Party Ship and the explosion at Plymouth; they promised to leave their mark on other Bicentennial celebrations. On July 2nd, bombs went off in a National Guard Armory, an empty Eastern Airlines jet, and a suburban courthouse. These blasts were not without antecedents, and for months bomb threats had been daunting the operations of the subway system, the Boston *Globe*, several television stations, museums, and so on.

Property isn't the only thing in jeopardy. Richard Poleet lies in Boston

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

City Hospital, hooked up to "life"-sustaining equipment, having been dragged from his car and stoned—nay, cinder-blocked—by a gang of black teen-agers. Black bus drivers are beaten up by bands of white kids. Black adolescents stone the white conductor of an Amtrak train as he has stopped to remove debris from the track. White punks assault two black men in an East Boston subway station. The anti-busing battle cries of ROAR ("Restore Our Alienated Rights") drone on over the city officials' pleas for sensibleness. Arch-segregationist Louise Day Hicks boycotts the Mayor's official "march against violence," saying that the "only march that will mean anything will be on Judge Garrity's [the man who ordered busing] courtroom." Politicians declare that the city is on the verge of racial warfare.

The muckamucks of the Eastern Intellectual Establishment look on from their cloisters, befuddled; the Brahmins peer out from their condominiums on Beacon Hill, slightly irritated. Tourists muse over flyers handed to them by members of the Boston police force, welcoming them to "Boston, Mass., Crime City U.S.A." "Our best advice to you," says the pamphlet, "is simple: Stay away from Boston and its Bicentennial attractions until things have changed!" (My paranoia is Pavlovian, but it never preëmpts the grammarian in me: barely distracted by the cowled skulls and black borders that ornament the flyer, my eye jumps immediately to the exhortations in boldface to "stay off the streets during the day, evening or nights!") "Don't blame me, I'm from Massachusetts" is an embarrassing bit of fanfaronade. The Bicentennial slogan, "Boston, where it all began," has soured in the way that earnest campaign shibboleths—"Nixon's the one" and "All the way with LBJ"—were transmogrified into bad jokes.

* * *

Then there were the fireworks. Magnificent pageantry traditionally flourishes in proportion to public anomie, and conditions couldn't have been better for Bicentennial hoopla: the republic needed an opportunity to work on a new image, and the body politic needed a few distractions from the old one. Spectacles were ministered like bread and circus. A 125,000-dollar Fourth-of-July tribute to the red, white and blue didn't seem too outrageous. In his day Pompey had brought to the Circus Maximus an extravaganza boasting the slaughter of "500 fierce Numidian lions" and "20 ponderous pachyderms" in order to woo the affections of the populace away from his co-Triumvirs. Renaissance princes put on mummeries designed to apotheosize the monarchs by making their personal frivolous trademarks icons of the state. Medieval pageantry made the ruler invincible by linking him to God and by cowing the subjects with religious hocus pocus. Fireworks, splendid nonmatter and an apt emblem of the spectacle, have always catered to the politics and religion of pageantry: they were invented 1000 years ago in China to be used in religious festivities; in France, several hundred later, Louis XV held great fireworks shows at Versailles (only kings could afford such ephemera) in order not only to amuse himself, but to humor and intimidate the *hoi polloi* who flocked around the palace gates to watch. Whether religious or political in function, spectacles have always intended to call attention away from the condition of the spectators.

* * *

The Boston Marathon on Patriots' Day was the closest the Bicentennial ever came to reproducing the excitement of the Circus Maximus. There were no fireworks, no red, white and blue bunting, and, in fact, the 26-mile race was an annual, not bicentenary occurrence. The heroes and heroines of the day staggered down the homestretch in questionable control of their peristaltic reflexes, draped with flotsam and jetsam that must have at one time been T-shirts, shorts, and headbands. The mount of one of the policemen dignifying the event had left its monumental regards right on the finish line, and the competitors had to improvise a quick foxtrot in order to keep their sneakers white. But despite conditions that many might find repugnant, the entire crowd had been transported by the spectacle: cushioned by communality, yet isolated by anonymity, we on the sidelines could conjure up a feeling of life-and-death importance for a thoroughly benign event.

During my four years at a college happily situated on the Boston Marathon route, the most palpably unified gesture that the academic community ever made was to convene, with uncustomary gusto, on the side of the road to cheer on the bedraggled runners. By far the most intoxicating moment came during the marathon of my freshman year when Erich Segal scurried by; *Love Story* had just been made into a movie. We scoffed, we hissed, we jeered at him—not so much for writing a book that none of us could admit to having read, or for resurrecting Ryan O'Neal from a moldy grave in Peyton Place, but for having the gall to suggest that the movie be set and filmed at our high-toned school. The president of the college refused on the grounds that the movie would misrepresent her students: the scatological epithets for which Jennifer Cavilleri was famous had no place in our vocabulary.

The giddiness that rallied us undergraduates against Mr. Segal existed in some rarefied form at the Bicentennial Marathon several years later; but this time the audience was more heterogeneous, its expectations more diffuse, and the stimulus less precise. If patriotism is the headiness that comes from the deference of many egos to a common cause, then watching the Marathon was the closest I ever came to experiencing it. We "patriots" were a community with a purpose; we had some irrational attachment to this race, many of whose promising and determined athletes had been transformed into desperate retching individuals—like a country whose good intentions had gone awry.

* * *

Public spirit must have spent its fury on Patriots' Day; or else the Marathon, since it had a purpose beyond the diversion of the crowd, was too anomalous to lump with other Bicentennial fêtes. In either case, all the birthday parties that followed it fell into a category with Kikkoman Bicentennial soysauce dispensers, Mr. Mustard Bicentennial crocks, Bicentennial macaroni (cut out to read 1776, U.S.A., 1976), Bicentennial birth certificates, specials offering seven [7] vials of bull sperm for the price of six [6], and cement trucks painted with facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence (there is such an animal on the streets of Cambridge): they were pure frippery.

One event at least had the distinction of some connection with our country's historic origins, by confirming the tendency of our British cousins to provoke revolution on the Continent. Some fifteen miles due west of the Fourth-of-July gala on the Charles, Elton John, announced by a green, red and white pyrotechnic likeness of himself, decked out in a Statue of Liberty suit of red and white striped hotpants

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and a star-spangled shirt, was inciting 60,000-plus teen-agers to pyromania. One journalist aptly called it King George's revenge. The curious display of patriotism prompted a member of the audience to wax as pessimistic as indignant colonists had on the morning after the Boston Massacre. In a letter to the Boston *Globe*, he wrote that "it is a travesty that on the 200th anniversary of this nation's birth, the flower of our youth should act in a manner that the Russian press denotes as hooliganism. Those of us who fought in wars to keep this country viable are saddened to see that we have succeded in siring a generation of nihilists. Elton John, go home! Washington, Philadelphia, Peoria, all cities, take note!" When it came to revolution, imitative fallacy was evidently not a part of the Bicentennial bag of conceits.

* * *

Of all the superfluous pageants, Aloha '76 had to be the most rococo. In honor of the Bicentennial our fiftieth state brought a little of the South Seas to the banks of the Charles: twenty-foot swaying palm trees, precipitous rocks, a waterfall, and a volcano whose summit glowed provocatively throughout the show. Hundreds of dancers cavorted among the tropical matter: there were hulas; there were torch dances; there were limbos and stick dances, colorful satin and bronze skin. And lest the audience should forget that this was a *Bicentennial* affair, snippets of American history ("Two hundred years before Columbus sailed to your shores, people were doing the hula. . . . .") were forced into the script for quick reorientation. This isn't to imply that muskets and powered wigs are requisite for Bicentennial numbers. In fact I'm very big on natural disasters, have wanted to die in a tidal wave ever since I saw *Krakatoa East of Java*, and the eruption of the volcano at the evening's climax—complete with smoke, flame and tremors—sent a little *frisson* up my spine. But really, a manmade natural diaster? And that was no more supererogatory than the entire show, which was itself hardly more gratuitous than the whole Bicentennial shebang.

* * *

Some of the Bicentennial spectaculars promised to be once-in-a lifetime historical moments, but turned out to be as redundant as Aloha '76. Operation Sail, with the advent of the Tall Ships, merely insinuated a new idiom into local conversation, converting Boston not into an eighteenth-century seaport, but into a Tall City overrun with Tall Buses, Tall Taxis and Tall Tourists. The ships (the oldest of them built in 1909) motored into Boston Harbor with their sails furled, made an abrupt about-face, and exited. The fireboat that led the way, sheathed in great jets of water, was more captivating than its taller sisters, and the twenty-seven entries in the Great Bicentennial Bath Tub Race held on Cape Cod a month before, were more prepossessing and varied. The Queen of England's visit to Boston had been similarly inflated with historic implication, and understandably. But the most interesting things about the occasion (the Queen's paens to the colonies were singularly lacking in punch) were that all the women wore hats in deference to the monarch and that the mayor, whose wont it is to make physical (palm-to-the-small-of-the-back) contact with the dignitaries he squires about town, had been briefed in advance to keep his hands off the Queen.

* * *

The realest spectacle of all wasn't the brainchild of Madison Avenue, nor was it contrived by the friendly folks at the mayor's office; CBS wasn't there to cover it. Clifford Odets might have written the script (whose heavy-handed symbolism would have been edited), and Sam Peckinpah could have directed. On April 5, 1976, Theodore Landsmark (a name with as much eponymous potential as Willie Loman), age 29 (promise of youth), an attorney with an architecture degree from Yale, leaves City Hall to make his way to an affirmative action (yep) meeting. In City Hall Plaza he is attacked by a group of white high school boys from South Boston who are participating in an anti-busing project. Weapon: an American flag. More ironies: As executive director of the Contractors Association of Boston, Landsmark had sponsored a program providing jobs for South Boston residents, maybe even relatives of the kids who beat him; Landsmark has never been a champion of busing. Mayor Kevin White looks on from a window of City Hall, Boston, where it all began. END.

* * *

Every so often I suffer an existential anxiety in which a temporary environment appears to me permanent, absolute and inescapable. It hits me a lot in bus stations, and at the opera. At the Alabama Junior Miss pageant of my senior year in high school, the seventh contestant had just done the seventh rendition of "Alfie" and I felt an understated panic begin to invade my circulatory system. I muttered to myself over and over through the entire song: *What is the world like outside of this auditorium? How is it possible that I was ever not in this room?* I try unsuccessfully to come up with mental images of home, school, the swimming pool; sometimes I can't even come up with a semblance of my brother's face.

That's how it is with the Bicentennial. I can't remember what life was like before every happening had a claim to historical magnitude, and I can't predict a return to the familiar as we wind our way to the Tricentennial. Oh, sure, I can picture Shreve, Crump & Lowe without Tall Ships window displays, and the MBTA without red, white and blue subway cars. It's the Theodore Landsmark brand of spectacle, the kind that is saturated with metaphor, that I can't reduce to the particular, to the ordinary and variable. Apocalyptic violence. And, oh, that reminds me of my sniper.

—Diane McWhorter

COMING IN THE NAR:

The 1976 National Foosball Finals

Our man in the north, Leo J. Hertzel, captures the excitement, skill, and dedication surrounding America's premier tavern sport, played out against the panorama of magic Minneapolis-St. Paul.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WEST BRADFORD CELEBRATES MASSACRE!

Battle Staged As Bi-Centennial Observance

THREE INJURED AS MASSACRE UNFOLDS!

JULY 4, 1976 (Special) — A crowd of at least 2,000 turned out to watch the West Bradford Jaycees, and Volunteer Fire Companies B and C, re-enact one of the area's most colorful historical events, the West Bradford Massacre of 1689. The Ceremony was the town's primary Bi-Centennial activity.

In a speech following the Massacre Ceremony, Mayor Tom Ryan of West Bradford said, in part, "The history of West Bradford as we know it today begins with the Massacre of 1689. Prior to that time a completely different bunch of people had settled this area. The Indians killed practically every last one of them, and we're here to celebrate the spirit of that awful tragedy. Following the West Bradford Massacre different people moved in here, banded together against the Indians and eventually incorporated the town. Some of the oldest families in the village got their start right after the Massacre. We're gathered here today to pay tribute to those brave and courageous souls to whom we owe so much, who died in the great Massacre of 1689."

THE MASSACRE WAS staged on the Village Green. A narration was provided by Henry Barrow, President of the West Bradford Historical Society. Over a P.A. system rented specially for the occasion Mr. Barrow described the Indians creeping up on the unsuspecting settlers, and the flight of the horrified villagers when they realized the Indians were upon them. There was much yelling and shooting as the bloodthirsty Savages (the firemen) swooped down on the sleeping settlers (West Bradford Jaycees). John Simmons and Fred Hart, both of Butternut Lane, received superficial injuries and burns when their antique cannon backfired and exploded during the melee.

The Colonial women were dressed in replicas of the full calico skirts and gingham dresses sewn by members of the West Bradford Historical Society. Miss Jane Smith, of 7 Old Colony Road, wore an actual pair of antique leather buskins which had belonged to her great, great grandmother. She represented one of the settlers who survived the massacre, hiding behind a row of spectators.

THE FIREMEN representing Indians were dressed in loincloths, leggings, and moccasins and had bare chests and war paint. Leslie Wiggitt, of 619 Dory Drive, was shot in the chest by an unknown settler who neglected to use blanks. He was playing the part of an Indian, and it was not discovered that he was actually shot until his groaning interrupted the Mayor's speech. He was listed in poor condition at the Haskell Memorial Hospital.

John Stavoli, the West Bradford Chief of Police, said that he intends to investigate the incident "to make sure that no foul play was indicated."

It was a truly moving historic spectacle, and educational as well for the youth of West Bradford. There were cider and doughnuts on hand provided by the Jaycee Wives and the Fire Department Auxiliary.

THE TOWN COUNCIL of West Bradford has made copies of Mayor Ryan's complete speech available upon request. Simply write the Town Hall. Copies are printed on parchment paper and are suitable for framing.

–W. J. Holinger

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN DITSKY

THE GIRLS GO BY, SWEET

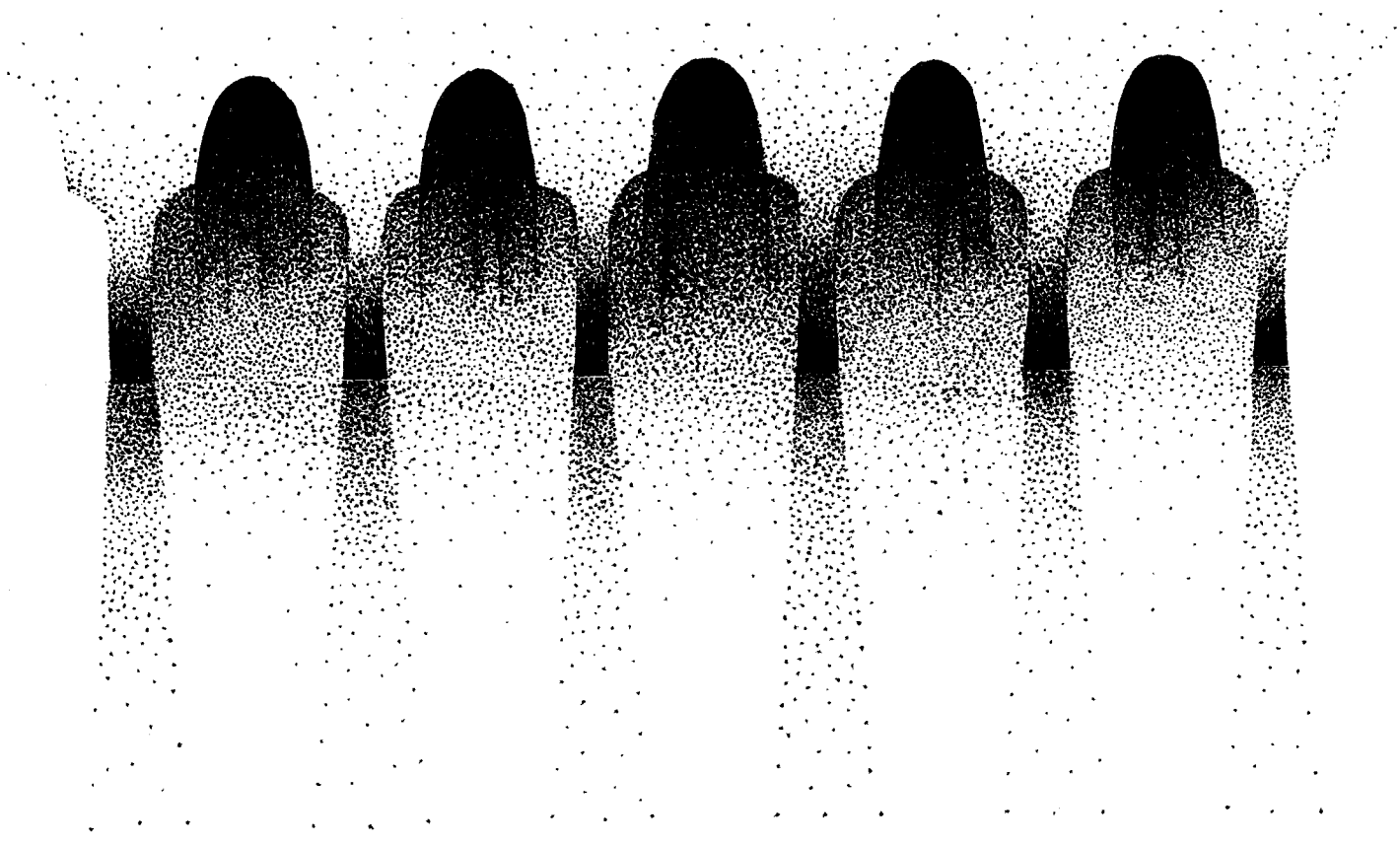
The girls go by, sweet
in their thousands; when
I let myself forget
their snarled allegiances,
their vicious candors, I
think them bubble-like,
blown bright (by whom?)
and temporary past
my static vantage point.
(I'm no Snodgrass,
need no nudge
to make me stare;
I'm not so poet-old.)
My atrophescent passions
stir, my root aches,
when they float by
to burst upon the grass
or in dark places. Ghost,
I'm time-dimensioned
past capacity to touch
(or shatter!) them.
I'm strictly a device
to help process and pack:
my function's applying
lacquer, proper tags,
and tuning deftly, all
unfelt, what inner
works exist. Yet
I'm flooded, dried,
tugged, not willing. My
mental spectrum's splintered
constantly, kaleidoscoped
on them by old instinct
and ever-newer eye.
My brain orders acts
they know are obsolete:
I sort and grade as if
my doing so had meaning
for them. It's like the way
I shake the milk I take
—from what I'm likely still
to call the ice-box—
the better to disperse
the cream that's not been
there for years, or feel
my every afternoon
go cozy-dark at 5
as if radio serials
mummified with childhood
were still about to speak.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

MARY PETERSON
RUTH GOLDSMITH
JOCELYN SILER
SALLY GEORGE
MARIAN URY
LINDA ASHOUR
ELIZABETH ANTON
RAE-JOLENE SMITH
MARGARET GOGGIN
CAROL ADORJAN

THE WOMANLY ART OF FICTION



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Story by Mary Peterson

COMING ABOUT

Sido carried the cold paper sack of six-packs low before her like a pregnancy. When she reached the dock edge she stopped, foolish with the brown bag in her arms, its damp bottom edges pressing to her thighs. She wore shorts, a navy t-shirt, and a white sailing hat she had bought too small and wore for spite at herself now because of that carelessness.

They were loading things onto David's lobster boat—two chests of ice and plastic sacks of meat sandwiches, fishing rods, bait in paper cartons, and the jackets and sweaters. None of them saw her. She hated unfamiliar situations—when she didn't know the rules—and being on the dock was one, and she wished uselessly David would know and come help, but he did not know, and there was nothing to be done. She hiked up the bag and wished for height behind it, for stature, but she was small. Then she wished for a miracle of sudden knowledge about boats and going to sea. She went down the steep ramp finally failing all wishes, and they saw her, and Robert waved.

It would not be a good day out. Fog still drifted into the harbor from the grey North Atlantic, although it was eleven. He had hoped the fog would burn off. She didn't know fog, though now it looked worse than when she'd left to go the house for the beer he'd forgotten.

Now he was on board, checking the boat. Sido thought he looked oddly severe, like a military officer.

"It's his wife," Robert said behind her.

She nodded without turning.

"Leslie just left."

"Why?" she asked, watching David. He climbed to the bow of the white boat like a cat, supple and quick-footed. What an interesting, cold man, she thought. What a remote man. She considered that she might or might not wish to know him better. But she did know him.

"Something with the kids," Robert said shortly. He took the beer from her arms and handed it across to the woman with the bandana scarf who stood on the deck of the small sloop tied up between the dock and David's boat. Then he cupped his hands up to his face. "We should get underway before noon, dear," he called to David. The accent was thick Down East; *deauh*.

When she turned away, Jess was coming down the dock toward her. He was David's close friend, and the only one who really talked to her. Perhaps it was the divorce, or the rest wished to show David they had no designs on his new woman. She knew she warmed to strangers slowly, she was bad at cocktail parties, when they didn't address her she forgot them. Then later she regretted herself. She had hoped to be new and vivacious with David but she always found herself not new. She knew also she wanted him to love her, and that Jess saw and suspected her for it. Well, she thought, I'm suspect, and I'm guilty. It was a matter of accepting. She reminded herself she was thirty-two and divorced, no kid.

Jess put his arm around her shoulders and said, "Hello, Love," into her ear, bending to put the words under the brim of her hat. She stiffened. She looked into his muddy green eyes and then let her eyes fall as far as his barrel chest. He wore shorts and a denim jacket, and a look on his face of huge disdain for everything. He was golden and large. She wondered suddenly what the flesh of his chest would feel like; but it would be under her fists.

"There he is," Jess said in a smug voice. "Admiral David. See him?"

"Leslie was here."

"Oh, she comes by, now and then." He grinned, white lines disappearing around his eyes, and he moved his legs just apart and set his shoulders. But he was graceful.

"Is he really getting divorced?"

"Sido." He touched her arm. "I think he really is."

"What does she want, coming down here?"

His answer was David's of the night before: "She doesn't know what she wants."

"Neither do I," she said, although he wouldn't believe it. She squinted and turned away.

"I do." He slid back and opened his arms. "Enough money. Sex, good food. I know just what I want."

"But you're a hedonist, Jess," she said, on cue.

He smiled acknowledgement. Well, that's finished, she thought. That little exchange, that time. And she was suddenly exhausted. She turned to see the boat, where David was stowing things below. I'll probably go out and be sick all over the damned thing, she thought. That would be like me. And David will take care of it. And Jess will see, she thought, watching the fog come in.

His beer can was carefully snug up against the window and he stood with both feet braced wide apart, a cigarette tight in his lips. He watched the sea. The fog was dense and impossible, and her own eyes burned from peering into it. She looked

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too hard and now she saw shapes where there were none: a ridge of ghostly trees that looked like shoreline; a schooner rising up out of the swells; birds flying near the water. But her eyes were lying. The sea was empty, and whatever lay beyond the fog was out of their vision.

"You ought to sound the horn, Davey," Robert said. He sat on the edge of the decks, his fishing hat with its long brim pulled close over the muddy light hair that curled up under it. His thick mouth curved open, showing white teeth.

David pressed the horn and it went like a voice into the fog. There was no answer. The boat drilled strong and hard into the rolling water.

Sido had been sitting near Robert, getting used to the motion, and now she stood and tried to walk forward. She had to grip the deck edge, and she paused and lurched up again while they watched her. David raised his empty beer can and asked her to pass it to Robert. He motioned for another.

"When your mother was an alcoholic you don't drink beer," she had told him, giving him messages if he was quick enough to receive them. "You don't get a taste for it because you still see her lying on the couch soused to the gills, embrassing you." He had nodded, but did he know what she meant? He had put his arms around her then and kissed her neck, did he really know what she meant?

Stumbling over the gear box, she got his beer and brought it back. He lifted it. She stood near his shoulder watching the sea.

"Too bad it's not clear," he said. She raised up and saw the bow of the boat rise and dip again with the waves. "I wanted a good day. But I like fog too." He half turned and put his arm around her waist. "You're so quiet," he said.

She stood planted near him in the boat that was a perfect mystery to her and felt the rolling ocean that was vast and strange in the fog. She felt the desolation of their course, a boat loaded with fishermen. She said, tipping her face up to him, "I'm having a good time!"

"Want to run it?" he asked her, and moved from the wheel.

In his place, she put her feet as his had been and felt the boat give under her while he explained over the noise of the engine how to use the wheel to bring it back on course within two degrees. He said they were going eight knots and their course was to Boon Island. He said you could not ever be exactly on course but you could keep it close. She nodded, watching the compass needle slide over. When she had the feel of the motion, he turned and went below, leaving her.

The wheel balanced against her hands. It moved, she drew it back. The water hissed as the bow hit it. She let the wheel give to port and come back again, holding it with a lift in her right hand. Anticipate it, he had said. Feel it coming. It came to her she had never wanted to learn anything quite so much as she wished to learn this boat. She didn't care about being a fool, a beginner. Her back was to them. She wanted the muscles in her legs and shoulders, in her arms, the pull of the wheel against her hands, the tossing of the boat, all to gather up and be one thing. She wanted it because she did. Standing firmly, her legs taking the shock of motion, she made her hands go lighter on the moving wheel. When he came back she realized she had forgotten him.

MARY PETERSON has just begun teaching at Bradford College, commuting from Maine. This is her second appearance in NAR.

David took the boat to a fishing shoal where the depth was sixty feet, and the four men got out their rods and bait, and David cut the engine to let her drift. Sido and Gail, the woman in the bandana scarf, sat watching and eating sandwiches. She couldn't remember Gail's husband's name: the last was Runlett, but the first had gone by her. It was too late to ask.

Jess took clam necks from a carton and held them up. "Sido!" he called, dangling the clams. "Aren't these something?" They hung like miniature penises, but she had seen them before.

"All you think of is sex, Jess. God made the clams—He must have intended something."

"God's a voyeur," Jess said. He threaded the slippery clams onto his hook.

She shook her head.

The fog had lifted but there was a silvery haze still along the shoreline, and silver too on the backs of the waves. She stood and went forward intending to crawl up on the bow. She had her sea legs now and didn't care that they watched her. When she went past the cabin she took a flotation cushion and slung it over her shoulder like a pocketbook. David watched her. He was tired; she saw it in his face. She wondered how many of the men knew they had had only four hours of sleep the night before, and wouldn't they be amused by that, and wouldn't they tease him? If they were alone on the boat they would be pissing over the side rails, making jokes about David being worn out, for he might tell them about last night. She wondered, would he tell them?

"Don't you want to fish, Sido?" he called.

"No. I'm going up to lie down."

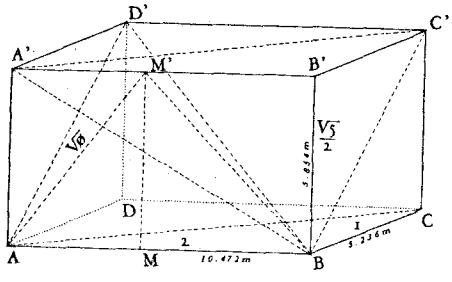
"You can go below."

"I'd rather be in the sun."

She crawled forward and lay on the white painted bow of the boat. It rolled now and again as if to toss her. Finally she moved the cushion to a spot below the cabin, and lay on one side with the cabin against her back. They drifted about three miles offshore. If the men caught fish it would be an afternoon of fishing, she saw now, and if not it would be an afternoon of moving from one spot to another looking for the fish. Jess had caught a dogfish but no one, yet, had a haddock. They wanted haddock. They had said they wanted bluefish but no one was too hopeful. Blues weren't running yet on the Maine coast. She couldn't imagine the fish on the bottom of the sea, even imagine a depth of seventy feet, although she had fished in lakes when she was small. Her father had been a good sportsman and had loved the water, and probably he would have loved the ocean if he had ever seen it. He had been like David, preoccupied, a man who knew guns and hunting dogs and fishing. How strange it was to be with such a man. She had spent the last few years, and all the years of her marriage, with University people. David was not an intellectual. He was a practical, organized man who loved his family and who had not wanted a divorce. But Leslie was a little crazy. Now he said of it, "It's happening. I don't think about it much. It's just happening." As if it was a weather system. And she knew Jess accused him of rebounding with her. She knew Jess warned him against her. All of which seemed to imply she wanted him, wanted to land him just as they wished today to take the fish, but it wasn't true. She had met him in the resort bar after a day on the beach. They had got drunk and danced together. One thing led to another, though she'd sworn to herself since the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

divorce she would not attach herself to a man again. Well, she thought, lying on the rocking white deck, do I love him or not? Perhaps it is only summer, just the kind of poignant thing that will happen in a summer, as in a war. When winter comes, even autumn, it will be over. She did not know how she would feel when it was over. There would be an ache in her for the boat, she knew now, but would there be an ache for David? It came to her she might love two things—him, in a way she was not yet able to define, and the boat too, the good balanced feeling of the boat. Perhaps it was this: that with David she did not feel balanced, and at the helm of the boat she did, and perhaps the two things worked together to make one. But she wondered, if it was truly one thing, then what was the future?



Her sense told her that summer clarified. Summer made a whole all brilliant and warm and of itself, and when it ended the thing ended. You could look back on a summer and see it entire, and not expect anything future from it. To haul a summer feeling up into the next season was difficult; it didn't ride well. They were living a resort life now, she almost living with him, and it had its own implied ending.

And hadn't she promised herself never to fight the endings?

"Sido!" he called from the helm. "Move back. We're getting underway!"

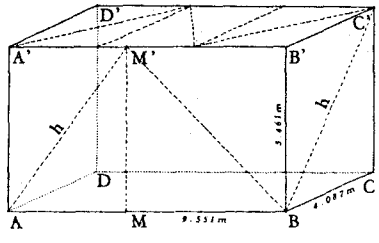
She rose up on one elbow. "No. I want to stay here."

"You're sure?"

"Yes."

"Then hold on."

As David started the engine Jess came up the side of the cabin to sit with her. They felt the bow go up as he opened the



throttle, and Jess watched her. Damn it, she thought, I've been around boats before, though not at sea. This is only my second time at sea but I know enough to hold on, for Christ's sake. She frowned at him but he was looking away. "You treat me like a kid," she said to his profile.

"Just being careful."

"I suppose you think I don't know the sea is lethal." The waves were silver and cool and the boat rode the swells, and she watched them break from it churning white water.

"Touchy women bother me," Jess said.

"I'm not touchy."

"Defensive then," he said.

"Now we're coming about," she said, feeling the boat turn.

"No," Jess said "That's for sail boats."

She wanted to ask him what about his own marriage, defunct last year, and to tell him he was not perfect as he wished to be and she could see the little scars, like scratches on a gold ring, all over him. He had been imposing and suave since he was in prep school, since puberty, he was that kind of man. The only thing the years had added was a patina; he was better worn, he took lustre that way. It wasn't hard to imagine him at fifty, still big-chested, elegant, and worn. He was so much a type of man she caught herself up, fearing she imagined him.

It was not like this with David. David was real. He worried and he forgot the beer, and he wondered what would happen to the kids after the divorce and he was kind and when he put his arms around her he spoke her name over and called her Sweetheart, and he fell asleep faster than any man she had ever known, positively dropping into it. When he was asleep she lay beside him thinking, going slowly, then having alpha visions. She would not understand even if she could explain to him, and she was sad for it. She had found the sleeping almost at once as their place of departure. She would not have chosen that place, given choice.

Yet it was for his null stability that she valued him. She could deal with her own hallucinations: she would fear his. She had learned to live with the pain of seeking after herself: she could not bear it in him. Yet he didn't know her, she knew he didn't know her. And Jess, sitting so near her, believed surely that he knew her, but he was wrong.

Jess pointed off to starboard, where a brilliant jellyfish floated just under the surface, its dull, lax streamers of tentacle drifting away from its gorgeous cap.

"I've never seen one before," she exclaimed.

"Never?"

"This is only my second time at sea," she said. She pulled her hat down to shield off the sun, and looked out over the billowing water.

When they had stopped a second time she went back to the stern. Robert baited a hook for her and she sat on the gear box and cast a line into the water with the men's. Gail was not fishing. She watched the sliver of line run down into the water, her thumb on the reel. When it had touched bottom she locked it and drew it up again four turns. The clams would float there. David came to sit near her and put his arm around her shoulders, pulling her toward him. It was a gesture her husband had made; before she had time to think, it warmed her.

The men talked about the fishing and when they thought the blues might begin striking, and Jess who had also come back to fish explained you got blues, like stripers, by trolling, not by dropping a line, but it was only more information and she only half heard it. There would be no fishing, and no boats either, after this summer, unless she was able to find a way herself to have one. She sat with the refracted sunlight on her shoulders calculating how long she would have to work, and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with what income, to get a boat of her own. Then she drifted with the idea: a sail boat or a lobster boat? And how big? And what to name it? And where to put the mooring?

There were so blessed many things in the world that she wanted, and the list still grew. It wasn't money, she didn't care for money, but she did care for the things money got you. Since she'd gone to graduate school she had been broke all the time, and she was weary with the student life, all hand to mouth. Money got you travel and dance lessons and clothes that were a pleasure to wear and the silver bracelet you wanted in the League of Craftsmen's Store. It got you oriental rugs for the living room and a house that looked out to sea. It got you the horse you'd wanted since you were eight years old. You could buy time for yourself with money. You could find interesting people because you would be where they were. Then she shuddered. It was vile to think so much about money. She had been safe and happy without David and she would be safe and happy without him again. She would remember the summer and what he had taught her about boats; she'd be damned if she longed for it. Everything in her life now, her own life, back in New Hampshire, was chosen and precious to her—the boots she had bought with the first paycheck from the temporary job in Boston last year, the wool blanket, the tools for her car, books she liked, clothes she found on sale in the good stores. In spite of forced poverty she had done well enough; it wasn't a league for boats; it wasn't a league for summer houses on the Maine coast; there were things missing in it. But there were people she loved, and she had a direction.

Jess had said to her, "He hasn't much money you know. It's in the family, but he hasn't much of it himself."

And she was angry, too angry to speak. As if she had been thinking that way of David, or counting on anything from David. As if she would have stayed with him for any reason other than his gentleness with her, his sanity. The rest, the trappings of wealth, was a holiday. You don't hold on to holidays, though if you're lucky, you find them, and if you're calm, you enjoy them.

"What do you want?" David had asked. They were lying on the couch together. He had reached for his scotch and water and she had rubbed the bottoms of his stockinged feet. She was drinking orange juice with ice in it. It was midnight. They had spend the day together. They had talked about her family in the Midwest and about how she did not see the ocean first until she was twenty, and about her love of the water. It had been easy until he asked her what she wanted and then she was stunned silent by the question, answers chasing one another around in her mind, all of them equally lies, all of them equally honest. She would have said, When I'm with you it's you that I want, and when I'm away and alone with myself I'm not sure. Then she would have said, I want you because I created you before I ever knew you, even, at eighteen, imagining a love affair with a man named David. She might have told him, I want you because you have brown eyes, and I do, and you write left handed, as I do, and you call a cat 'kits-kits-kits,' just as I do. But her mind turned instead to what she had known and wanted before she met him, before the boat and the silver water, before she had tried to be close to a man again. I want to be whole, she would have said then. I want to be myself all entire. I want to work and value it. I want not to be afraid of what I can't be, or what I can't do. I want to let go.

She looked up at him and said, "I want my work to go well."

He nodded.

"I want to live near the ocean."

"Yes," he said.

"And I think I want to be close to another person, some day, although that's been unimaginable to me for a long while."

"Your divorce."

"Yes."

"You were hurt?"

"Everybody gets hurt in a divorce," she said to him. "I had the most God-awful civilized divorce in the world and everybody got hurt." She wanted the thing she said to ring down into the real deapths of him, and her; she wanted it to sound there where it was not so easy any more to love anyone. She realized she had wanted to tell him the truth.

Late in the afternoon, they had only three fish. The sea churned in the boat's wake and David gave her the course to steer towards Kittery Harbor. They would come straight upon a red buoy first, he said, and then swing the boat around and in. He said there would be currents and she should watch for them, since they would seize the boat and pull it about. Sh nodded squinting into the light. The sun was going low in the sky, but they had plenty of time before it went down.

David went to sit with Robert and Gail, and she heard them joking. She wondered what the rest would say of her when she was off the boat. How they judged her, David's new woman. It was important to him what people thought. His wife was making a mess of his life right now, phoning everybody, embarrassing him, and her drinking made him worry for the children. Sometimes when she had been at his apartment Leslie had phoned and put the children on the line to say goodnight to Daddy—he called it "playing mind-games with kids"—and when he hung up the phone and came back she could see the cords standing out in his neck.

She spotted the red buoy and glanced back at him; he pointed the direction for her. Now they were in the mouth of the channel and the swells had changed to a quick chop that made the front of the boat jerk. She felt it in the wheel. She felt it under her hands. She had to move quickly to recover course with it. Listening back, she heard David talking with Jess now.

In a minute he would take the wheel from her, since she was no kind of sailor yet to bring the boat to dock alone. She would give it to him and become a passenger again, a guest at sea, David's special guest, and she might go back to sit with Jess and watch while David brought the boat into the harbor as easily as if he had trained it with his hands. She did not know if he would ask her to go again. Perhaps she would not be on this boat again. But she would give the wheel to him; it belonged to him. She would go astern and take out a bottle of ginger ale and sit with Jess, and try to talk with Gail, wondering how the day had been for them. She had hardly got to know them.

She was glad the fog had burned off giving them a silver ocean, and glad she had gone to the bow alone. When he brought the boat up to dock, whether or not he loved her, she knew how she would leave it and she knew just the solid feeling the dock would have under her feet, how she would say goodbye to them all and thank them, and David, and then she knew what she would think later. That it would have been nothing. It would have been easy. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SIX VERY SHORT STORIES

1. THE BLACK DAFFODIL

by Ruth Goldsmith

Phone lines went where power lines hadn't yet reached. One can imagine her standing not quite chin-high to the table in those days, eyeing the phone. It would have been the kind that looked like a black daffodil, rising from a solid base on a straight stem to a flower-shaped mouthpiece. You lifted the receiver from its holder and the Operator said, "Number, please." The telephone was a weapon against isolation. Somewhere in that little skull, even then—it doesn't seem possible that *all* its uses as a weapon were being realized.

She had a nice bust and ankles, the two most important parts of the American female sex symbol. Also, she photographed and moved best in a framework of chrome or steel, glass, plastic, almost like a maze. The place where her career was born can be traced, too, to the point where she was picked, from the tiniest TV appearance: others never passed beyond that point and most never reached it.

Even when she was at the peak of at least two professions—television and marriage—there was about her what's tagged as the little-girl quality, and if there's a better way of saying it, it must be: she didn't know what was in store for her. Indications are that she realized the real power of the phone at one particular moment, in the manner that some religious awakenings take place.

She said, "If you talk without mechanical assistance, you talk to not very many at a time, and they have to get to the place and you have to get to the place. If you use the phone, you can talk to a number of people in succession, from the location of your choice, moving around if you wish, and finding them wherever they are. And you can keep it secret. It saves the other people something. In fifty minutes, allowing a minute for each completed call, you could talk on the phone to fifty people. Even if they lived fairly close to where you want them to be, it would take most of them more than fifty minutes to meet you there and get back again to where they were. Therefore you are saving, say, fifty people forty-nine minutes each, a total of two thousand four hundred and fifty minutes, or forty hours and fifty minutes. Translate that into dollars at twenty-five dollars an hour and it's one thousand and twenty dollars and eighty-three cents."

"Isn't she a doll," he said. She was in the process of losing her second husband and he was on his way to being the third. They were a match. At that point he could have snapped her in two. He was a powerful American male figure, but not in the public-public eye, only in the small, powerful-public eye. He was as crafty as a dog that doesn't growl because it relishes winning.

She started from a small point on the map and rose to world mention. She progressed from the soaps to shows, to larger parts, and finally to personality, talks and games. The twenty-four inch diagonal line of blackmail.

Where does blackmail begin? There may be a correlation between the telephone and liquor. Many a drunk reaches for the phone. Many can't resist long distance. It is not shyness, surely, that makes a person say "Hello". Nor summons another to say it first. An imperative. The habitual caller doesn't mind amplification of own-self in any way, likes publicity, prominence. Someone had to stop her.

There follows a correlation between the telephone, intoxication and violence. One can get intoxicated with the reach of words, the power to strike, and another, someone close, can be forced to strike to stop it. Whoever's at the other end of the line can't. In a telephone, a sounding body is always vibrating and the more rapid the vibrations the higher the note produced. The telephone and alcohol involve the lips and power, hold in thrall. She'd crawl to the phone if she had to, and crawl back if he knocked her away. Ultimately.

Before that, she devised the most magnificent game show of all time, called TELL-A-PHONE. In it—she was hostess, and it worked—the contestants sat in a row of tulip-shaped phone booths, plastic, colorful, and she sat up above them in a suspended sun-shaped booth with switchboard, monitoring their calls. She was the Operator. In advance, contestants told why they'd like to call a particular person, and the calls were made simultaneously. As the conversation in a particular booth became most interesting

---

RUTH GOLDSMITH has had other fiction in Fantasy and Science Fiction *and the* Atlantic, *"many years ago." She lives in Sarasota, Florida.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and revealing, she plugged into it. Switches were frequent, the revelations daring.

Potential contestants were interviewed by the talent coördinator first, then by her, before they were placed in the studio audience to be selected from it by applause of the studio audience. They had interesting stories to tell, associations, links, nuances, innuendoes.

She said, "I can manipulate the whole thing well enough so that I can get what I want from anybody. National or international, a touch of a button and they become ridiculous or scabrous. Men's pants and it's an alcholic, sex deviate, Communist, bribee and/or wearer of lace drawers. Women's pants and it's silicone from the neck down, pill-popper, lesbian, courtesan and/or lover of blacks. I have control."

She said once, "It takes some of us three tries before we find the right marriage partner. Did you know that it takes three figures repeated to make a design—because the spaces in between have to be established?"

He said, "You're a doll." In his way, he loved her. Finance was his partner, with its handmaidens, politics and arts.

Tele as a word means psychic affinity between two people, no wires. He warned her. He urged her to fly on a certain plane and then urged her not to, and it ended in flames. It was only a warning, because too many too close to too high had crashed in planes to use that as a means.

She never told *all* she knew, whether from warning or from a kind of loyalty or from a backwoods common sense. It was death finally by telephone, a device, tool or weapon strung by electricity. That was part of the mystery.

He put wooden crosses on her grave, poles with cross-arms strung with wires and bejewelled with blue glass petticoat insulators. That was back where she started and in time the insulators were stolen because they've become collector's items and there are collectors even out in the sticks, or just passing through. □

2. THE CRYSTAL PALACE

by Jocelyn Siler

It was the smell, I said. Allen got out of bed to ask, and I said it was the smell I noticed most, the smell of pencils and chalk and country kids and the floor. The floor smelled old and dusty, and the bathroom smelled like pee and pine soap, and the brown crackly towels smelled like pee when they got wet. And Allen was shaking and grinning, but I had a green dress with a lace collar to wear, and Mama starched it so the skirt stood out. And Allen was going into first grade so he asked what I noticed most.

The next day he came out into the school yard holding a crayon picture tight by one edge so that the paper wrinkled. And he said, no, it was the noise. The noise of kids close together, feet moving, echoing in the bathroom, papers and pencils being dropped, and kids yelling at recess.

We came home down the alley with Mark Turner, and when we got to the holy roller church Mark picked up a rock out of the dirt and threw it at the back wall where they were building on. Then I threw one, and Allen started yelling that he was going to tell and that Daddy said it was wrong. A man came out of the side of the church in a white shirt with his black hair all slicked down, and Mark and I took off down the alley. We didn't stop until we were in the back yard on the other side of the garage behind the cherry tree. We could hear Allen crying away down the alley, and he came into the yard and threw dirt at us. He'd fallen down and knocked the scab off his knee, and the blood was running down his leg into his blue sock. Mark and I kept laughing, and Allen was screaming because he was so mad.

After supper we played hide and seek, and Judy Cook came across the street. She was barefoot, and I wanted to take my shoes off because it was getting dark and the grass was long and cool against the hedge. But Mama wouldn't let me because of the hookworms. Daddy left for work carrying his violin, and his formal shirt looked blue in the twilight. He worked at the hotel, and we all went on Sunday nights to the concerts. I liked to go because the people always looked at Mama, she was so beautiful. But Allen hated wearing a suit, and he stiffened his back and pulled at the knot of his tie. The hotel was owned by the railroad, and it had columns like the White House, and President Eisenhower came there on week-ends to play golf.

After Daddy drove away, Mama sat on Shanklin's steps with Gordy and talked about Korea being over. But Gordy was still afraid of being drafted. Chopin played in Shanklin's flower beds under the rhododendron bushes. He always acted insane, chasing his tail or clawing back over his head at moths. Sometimes he would jump out at things he thought he saw in the grass.

JOCELYN SILER is in the graduate writing program of the University of Montana and feels "pretty silly" writing biographical matter.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then Mr. Shanklin drove up in the old hearse he used to pick up the dead people at their houses. He got out, and he was carrying a milk bottle, and the thick glass lip shone under the street light. He shook it at Mama on the step, and he asked her if she could guess what was inside. And he said it was a man who'd gone to sleep on a plastic-covered sofa smoking a cigarette and got burned up. He shook the bottle and it flashed in the street light. All the kids laughed and crowded around, and inside it looked like the hard cinders from the side of the railroad track.

Allen and I had seen dead people another time. That was in Brooklyn, before we came to Virginia. The Rosenbergs. They'd been burned up too—in the electric chair. Except they must have been burned up inside because they still looked like people outside. And Daddy and Mama had taken us so we wouldn't forget. It was hot. And there was a red Persian rug just like Nanna's. Daddy said they'd been killed because they wanted to have one world, and that's what he and Mama wanted, too, and that's why he'd fought in Spain.

The next day at recess I had to walk with Tommy Phillips as a partner, and I didn't want to hold his hand because he smelled funny. He wasn't a country kid, but his mother put wet stuff on his hair. I could see where the comb had gone in little lines, and it smelled like the creek behind the alley. One of the toilets in the girl's room had overflowed, and the gray floor was all wet. The barefoot kids walked in the dirty water, and it made me feel cold and dirty. The window was open just a little bit, and I put my forehead against the bottom of it so I could look out. Way on over beyond the white high school I could see smoke on the mountain above colored-town. Miss Trestle had told us there was a forest fire on Cate's mountain, and I could see little white puffs. It wasn't much, and I was disappointed because I thought there'd be more smoke.

When we came out of school all the kids were talking about the fire. And one of the Reed twins said the Van Deemon kids had started it. They didn't have any parents, and they lived in a shack all made out of old doors nailed together. We used to pass it on the way to Roanoke. Some of the doors were all glass panes, and it always made me think of The Crystal Palace that used to be at Coney Island. It was a maze, Mama said, and it was all made of glass so you couldn't tell which way was right, and you kept bumping and having to turn around.

Max and Gerda came for dinner. Max played the piano at the hotel with Daddy. He'd been in a concentration camp in Poland so that sometimes he stuttered and sometimes he didn't. Gerda was beautiful and she laughed with her head tilted back. They brought us boxes of chocolate, and all the pieces in my box looked like sewing things—scissors and thread and thimbles—and all of Allen's looked like tools. Daddy made drinks, and they sat in the livingroom on the flowered chairs, and we had to sit with them, too, for a while to be polite. I had on new socks, and I kept looking at them. They looked so nice and white, and they folded down so neatly without ruffling or anything. Allen was blowing spit bubbles and pointing the toes of his brown shoes. Daddy started talking about politics, and I knew it was all right for us to go out on the porch. We got the swing going really high, but we could still hear them inside. Mama was mad because Max didn't care, but Max said he didn't have to because he'd been an instrument so that a lot of people like her could be comfortable and care in a far-off way. And he said the only reason Daddy'd fought in Spain was that he'd been young, and it was an adventure.

Chopin had been lolling on the porch with his tail twitching, and he jumped up and bolted off the steps on one of his hunts. They were still arguing inside, but Max wasn't angry. He never got angry, and he said, "Don't talk to me. What about the people you smile at when you buy eggs, the ones who burn crosses and walk around in white bed sheets. What about the trench between the town and Nigger Town. I'm like you. I just want to be comfortable. Talking is comfortable."

A man was walking by on the sidewalk, and all of a sudden he started hopping and cursing, and we knew Chopin had jumped out of the hedge on to his leg. It was getting dark, and Allen and I got off the swing. We went out to the street and looked up at the mountain to see if we could see the fire, and it was like little triangles of flame. I thought it would be one great big fire, but it was just a line of little bright teepees on the mountain side. Then they all came out of the house, and Mama said it looked like the grinning mouth of a big dragon above the town. Max said that they needed people to fight the fire, and he asked Daddy why he didn't volunteer, and Daddy said he couldn't because of his hands and the violin. Max laughed and asked if Daddy had done a lot of thinking about his hands when he was in Spain, and if that was why he was still alive.

The next day Allen acted crazy at breakfast because Nanna was coming on the plane from New York. He kept laughing and he spilled his apricot nectar, and it ran down the wall in the breakfast nook and all over his corduroy pants.

Mama told us we wouldn't go back to school in the afternoon because we had to meet Nanna at the airport in Roanoke. She said we'd have to hurry and that we'd stop for lunch at Eagle's Nest because it was on the way. I liked Eagle's Nest because once I'd seen a snake come out of the pond there behind the kitchen.

When we got to school, Miss Trestle said that some of the houses in Colored Town had burned in the night, and that the state police were trying to get men from the town to fight the fire. Everyone was excited, and all the kids were running around in the school yard and laughing. Martin Watkins' father was the marshall, and he'd been up all night with some other men on the mountain. We used to see him sometimes when we went downtown. He wore a gray work suit and a cowboy hat, and he was always leaning on the rail at the creek bridge smoking a cigar. Everyone was crowding around Martin, and he said that his mother was scared, and that she'd sat up all night on the sofa with a robe around her knees waiting for his father.

Allen and I ran all the way home at noon. Daddy was in front of the house checking the oil in the Pontiac. It was new and it was the only car on the street, except Shanklin's big hearse, that didn't have a running board.

The main road east was closed because of the fire, and we had to take the old road that ran out of Colored Town, around the other side of Cate's Mountain. We went past the school, and Mark Turner was fooling around with Johnny

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morgan on the corner. I yelled out that we were going to Roanoke and that we'd probably get to see the fire.

They stopped swatting each other, and I leaned out the window until Mama told me to sit down. We went out Mountain Avenue over the wooden bridge that crossed the gully separating the town from Colored Town. The streets in Colored Town were all dirt, and there were no street lights or electric poles. I looked to see if there were any big cars, because Judy Cook said all the colored people had big cars even when they didn't have any lights or floors in their houses. But I didn't say anything to Mama or Daddy, because I knew they'd be mad. We weren't allowed to say "nigger" or call Colored Town "Nigger Town" like everyone else did.

There was smoke lying low around the shacks further over toward the fire, and Daddy turned the car until he found the paved road that ran along the side of the mountain. There kept being more and more smoke the further we went, and Daddy said maybe we should go back. Then there were some men in the road stopping cars, and the smoke was all red and flickery. I told Allen that they must be asking the men to get out of the cars and go with them and help. And he didn't say anything. He just held on to the back of the front seat tight with his eyes shut. One of the men came to the window of the car, and Allen opened up the door, and jumped out. He ran down the road crying, and his arms were hanging loose at his sides and jiggling as he ran. Mama went out fast after him, and when she caught him she held on to him tight. But Daddy didn't get out or anything. He just sat there looking tired, rubbing one hand over his eyebrows and then down over his mouth and staring at the floor in front of the seat. And out the back window I could see Allen's twisted face through the red smoke. □

3. TWENTY-TEN

by Sally George

It was a good company to work for. Annie wore what she liked in the office and the benefits were excellent. The head of the Department distributed the work fairly and Annie could leave early every Wednesday to see her therapist. Annie had come seven years ago, it was her third job after college. The first two now seemed distant. They had been degrading and inconsequential, and when she first came to the company the sense of freedom and dignity had bewildered her. Annie was a socialist but very pessimistic, and though she joked with her co-workers about their surplus value she was glad of her security there. Most of the women she worked with were much like her though some were married and she made a few friends she went to films with on weekends.

Something happened in the spring of her seventh year. The Personnel Department sent her a routine notice informing her that in 2010 she would be entitled to retire with benefits amounting to one-half her final salary. At first Annie thought this was funny and she put it on her bulletin board with the year 2010 circled in red. The next day her eyes were drawn to it often; she found herself staring at the number and thinking about it. It sounded so far off, another century, it was impossible to believe it would really come. But it would, and she might still be working here though the notice would have yellowed and crumbled and been replaced by others. Then there would be a party for her, Annie had been to many such parties, and she would leave. That's my whole life almost, Annie thought. Between now and 2010 coming here every day in the morning and leaving at night. On weekends shopping for groceries and going to movies. Thinking about it gave her an unutterably empty feeling and she took the notice down and put it in a drawer.

Later that week Annie became afraid of cancer. It had never been a preoccupation of hers and there was no history of it in her family, but she became conscious of it all around her. She could not tell if this was something new or if she were only noticing it for the first time. Four or five people in the office either had it or their sister had it or their new son-in-law had just gotten it. She was afraid of all kinds equally. She had never smoked but now she threw away the ashtray on her desk. She examined her moles for changes and made an appointment for a Pap test. She stopped buying bacon and bought an air purifier for her apartment. She bought all her food at the health-food store and got rid of her after-bath powder in case it contained asbestos particles. Annie thought she might already have cancer, but if she did not it seemed almost inevitable that it would strike her sometime in the future. The worst possibility was that it would wait until 2009 and thereby make her entire life meaningless.

After the first week of worrying about cancer, Annie could hardly remember what she used to talk to her therapist

---

SALLY GEORGE is from Brooklyn and is a certified non-practicing pest control applicator in New York State. She has had recent work in Redbook.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about. The therapist, whose name was Liane, couldn't seem to help.

"Well, Annie," Liane began after Annie had explained the situation, "of course it is possible that you will do nearly the same thing every week of your life and get cancer somewhere along the line—"

"You admit it's possible?" Annie asked anxiously.

"Of course it's possible, but—"

"But what?" Annie wailed. "You're not going to tell me not to worry about it, are you?"

It turned out this was what Liane had in mind. Annie refused to be comforted by anything so unreasonable.

"Maybe it's different for you because of the kind of work you do," she told Liane. "You help people, so if you got cancer tomorrow you might feel your life had been worthwhile. But my job's not like that, it's not meaningful. I'm really only living for myself so if I get cancer it's as if I was cheated and only lived for the company. I mean there are only five hours a day that are mine now, after I get home from work, and the company gets ten, so why shouldn't I worry about it?"

"What does cancer mean to you?" Liane asked. "Why cancer? You could as easily be run down by a truck, so could I, why shouldn't I start to worry about that?"

"Go ahead," Annie told her. "Maybe it's more appropriate for a therapist."

Liane suggested that Annie might like to find another kind of work.

"Well, what?" Annie said. "I've never been interested in social work or teaching, and I don't have any creative talent although I like doing needlework in my spare time. If I got married I'd be bored staying home and I'm only interested in kids a couple of hours at a time. What I really like to do is see my friends and be in love and go to films on weekends. And that always seemed like enough except"—here Annie burst into tears— "when I think about doing it till 2010 then it seems like it makes no difference that I was ever born."

After Annie left Liane she walked home slowly. She had been hoping, she realized, that Liane would present her with some new information which would put meaning back into her life. Annie had never seriously questioned her presence on earth before—not since college, anyway, when the purpose of life had clearly been the fun of having conversations about it. She was not of a religious or philosophical turn of mind and she thought if the 2010 notice had not come she might never have noticed the problem. It seemed unfair; only people who enjoyed contemplating such puzzles ought to be given them. She was overwhelmed by it so that one moment it all swam around in her head, plans of new careers and the seven warning signs, and the next instant it had all disappeared leaving her blank and stunned as if she had run into a wall.

Annie let herself into her apartment, a room and a half decorated with needlepoint cushions and still photographs of silent movie stars. Dinner was sitting in the refrigerator in a casserole dish, waiting to be put in the oven, but Annie did not have the energy to find a match yet. Slipping her shoes off, she sat in the boxy gold armchair and rested her feet against the coffee table. How, in these familiar surroundings, was she going to find an entirely new solution to this entirely new problem? Could she tolerate the newly pointless vista of her life or would it be better to take drastic action? Annie revolved these questions in her mind and somewhere in the middle of a complex chain of thought discovered that her foot was hurting. It came to consciousness slowly, at first she merely shifted her position a little, but when it persisted her other thoughts dissolved. The twinge seemed to be on the sole, right in the center where it pressed against the table edge. Annie stripped off her sock and twisted the foot upside down in her lap to look at it. There in the middle of her foot was a small black spot which would not scrape off and which, moreover, was surrounded by a faintly red, sore area. Annie's heart plummeted and she broke out in a light sweat. This could be it. Melanoma, one of the quickest killers. Of course, it might also be nothing; a passing inflammation, an embedded splinter. What to do? For an instant she could not think and then she drew a breath and the confusion moved aside like a cloud, everything was clear. There was, after all, only one thing to do in a situation like this. First thing in the morning she'd go to the doctor and get rid of the spot. They'd let her know later what it turned out to be. And while she was downtown she'd stop at the savings bank and check her balance so she could make a careful budget for after she quit her job. □

4. HEAT HAZE

by Linda Ashour

I believe in one-stop shopping and the power of positive thinking. Still, my friends find me elusive. I know this because they have always paused to explain. They can't complete the simplest anecdote without injecting "Oh, wait, Lou doesn't get it!" When I stand with my legs together, there is a blade of space between my thighs the shape of a sliced

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almond. Maybe they imagine that because I am thin, I think on a different level. But being thin only means I am hungry most of the day.

I am completely governed by the view from my window. If I can see the line of factories, the cotton mill especially, nothing can stop me. If there is rain, though, or such a heat haze that I can't make them out there is no consoling me. I live in a restored rowhouse in Savannah. We have a high-walled garden in the back filled with fruit-bearing trees. Our neighborhood has a high crime rate and we can't stop itinerants who rape our trees each season. I live in constant fear that one will come knocking for food or shelter. I would have to say yes and my husband has no patience with my tendency always to say yes.

I have no lover, even though I sometimes wish for one. I have a small tattoo that makes me modest at all the wrong junctures. When I was twenty I chose a festive red and green Indian one Mardi Gras week. Bare midriffs were the rage then and all I had to do was pull my dungarees down slightly and grit my teeth. Two years ago I did meet a corporate lawyer who spoke several languages fluently. We were to have late breakfast and spend the remainder of the day at his home in the country. I developed stomach cramps at the last moment and called it off.

My husband claims I have no heart and, more important, that I have lost my focus. In defense I remind him that I like Watteau. And I say I'll take a dirt footpath to a blacktop road any day. Then I remember how he reads—by schools, periods, categories—and I ignore his claims. He would have left me years ago but, as he says, who would toss a cat out in the wet night?

Sometimes I can get my children to stand in a line, according to height. I see a dead grandmother on my side and bits of my husband in their faces. But they are soon shouting and laughing and the continuity is gone. They never stop needing and occasionally, when I run out of answers, I am splattered against the nearest wall like grafitti.

I admit that leftovers bother me. Too many things wrapped in a sheath of foil or waxed paper make me pace. I was taught always to leave a bit of food to one side, but the children leave heaps that I can't throw away in good conscience. To resolve this I sometimes hold refrigerator treasure hunts, which have never been well-received. The children dance around me then, singing "loco lou," a song they made up.

Where I live there is a woman who stands in the street at eight o'clock in the morning. She wears a different sundress each morning and throws a rubber ball to her dog, who acts as if each retrieve is his first. I know this because I jog in the morning and she stands in the street without fail. I want to shake her out of this waste. After all, she is so pretty and who sees her but myself, running breathless and sweaty day after day?

I have a maid named Fern. She is very young and has gold frames around her four front teeth. She tells me the frames are a matter of personal style. When my husband was promoted in his design firm he came home early and led me to his car with my eyes shut. Fern sat in the back seat with a funny scarf wrapped around her head. She has several children by different men. Sometimes, when my husband is working, they visit for the afternoon. Fern looks at them while working a toothpick between her teeth and tells me she is looking for a big, black jungle bunny. "Just you wait," she says. My mother writes me weekly and always includes a passage on household help. I read this aloud to Fern and we rock with laughter.

I have always wanted to make a commercial for television. I know how hard it is to turn down a convincing case and I would like nothing better than to bail out a failing firm for horse liniment or a used-car business with poor sales. I have even staged a full one-minute ad and two typed copies are upstairs in my desk. When I tilt my head a certain way my face looks fuller and almost wistful. My husband says my voice is too high-pitched. It would be an irritant to television viewers, he says.

Our house has many eaves, making it a natural target for homeless birds. This enrages my husband, who fears their droppings, and he is always hosing out sparrows and smoke-colored birds I have no name for. When he read of the pigeon problem in New York City, he clipped the article on the bulletin board in the kitchen, underlining the discussion of lung disease brought on by fecal waste. When I garden, I occasionally find cracked eggs and dead bodies of birds so young they look like rubber.

My husband is a good father. His anger is controlled and consistent, so the children know their limits and are seldom confused. When the oldest, Elsa, turned twelve I called her into my room to tell her about sex. I had a hand-drawn diagram I'd spent some time making. She just laughed and hugged my neck, saying how he had taken care of it ages ago. How he had taken them all to a corner of the garden and begun with a simple discussion of growth and soil fecundity. So, when her friends began to whisper nasty things, wrong things, she was able to remember what her father said and forget the rest. I had trouble with that. There are certain things a mother should say.

I shot my mare last month. She was barely three years old. My father sent her from Louisiana just after she was weaned. She was an embarrassment to him, an accident from a good line, so he sent her out in a rebuilt U-Haul. I boarded her with a family who has a few acres in the country. She had a large white patch on her belly and even with a special diet could never fill out. I asked Mr. Saunders to please keep her out of the south field, that it was full of chuckholes. When she twisted her legs in that field we all made an effort, keeping her quiet in a close stall for months. Her front legs looked like a wishbone after that and she took twenty minutes to cross the paddock for feeding. It's hard work burying a dead horse.

My husband's first wife visits me often. She is a small, dark woman who always smells as if she's just eaten. She is fond of my home and thinks it is full of wonderful things. She despises my husband, telling me how he kept her locked up. That he made her live a disgusting, cloistered life, not at all the life I have now. She looks at the pictures of my children and sighs, saying she is infertile. I mentioned her visits once. My husband called his lawyer and for

---

LINDA ASHOUR is a native Oklahoman, presently working with a theatre company in Los Angeles. This is her first published story.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a time I heard nothing from her. Then she began coming again, using the kitchen entry instead of the front. She tells me she has taken electrolysis treatments for years. I am not to share this with my husband. She says he would only use it against her.

My husband thinks I am an unhappy woman. That unhappiness is registered in the slope of my shoulders and the looseness of my mouth. I don't believe this. If I were unhappy I would always think of other ways to live and I don't even dream at night. Sometimes, though, mostly when there is no music in the house, I get in the economy car and just drive. □

5. THE MAGIC UNBECOMING BLOUSE

by Marian Ury

A woman went to her closet one day and saw an unbecoming blouse. How it had got there she couldn't imagine, but it said "wear me," so she put it on. At the end of the day it said "wash me," so she washed it. "Iron me," it said, for it hadn't even the decency to be drip-dry. "Hang me up," and then it was back in the closet, as unbecoming as before and a little bedraggled as well. The next morning it said "wear me." This was the day of the monthly meeting of the neighborhood women's guild, an event she had very much been looking forward to, and she had been planning to wear a knit in powder blue, her favorite color, with a silk artificial rose at the neck and some good jewelry, but instead she obediently put the blouse on, over a plain skirt. She wore it again the next day, and the next after that. Several people inquired solicitously if she was unwell, and though it should have been her turn next to be chosen hostess to the guild, no one remembered to ask her.

The woman's name was Emily. She was fifty-five (though it wouldn't have mattered if she had been a year or two older or younger), had been married, as she liked to say to her friends, thirty happy years, and had grown children with children of their own who visited for several weeks annually. She believed that no matter what your age you should take care of your appearance, and when she had worn the blouse seven days running she folded it up very small and put it in a drawer; but not long afterwards she took it out and hung it in her closet again. She put it in a box in the garage, tied up the box and called a charity that took away old clothes; but just as the workmen from the charity were carrying the box out she ran after them, told them she had changed her mind, and so they wouldn't think she was trying to welsh on her contribution gave them her chiffon evening dress and a beaded sweater.

She tried hiding the blouse behind others in the closet, or even hanging them over it, but it was always the first thing that caught her eye as she opened the door. Perhaps it was a matter of will, she told herself. A friend whom she hadn't seen in months telephoned to invite her to a party, and on the appointed evening she had gotten a dress laid out on the bed and slipped over her head and had already zipped it up the back when on an impulse she took it off and put on the blouse and a plain skirt. Her husband had been working hard lately and had grown somewhat inattentive; at the party he scarely spoke to her. He seemed rapt in conversation with a bleach-blonde divorcée. But afterwards, as they stood at their own front door, he turned to her and all but shouted, "For God's sake, Emily, do something— Do something, I don't care what! Change your hairstyle or get yourself some clothes."

She had already tried changing her hairstyle, but the hairdresser had not been much interested, only muttering unpleasantly to himself about "women who let themselves go." At the dress shop the saleslady escorted her firmly to a fitting room, sat her down on a hard little bench, and brought her round after round of blouses to try on. How beautiful they were! There were powder blues and pinks and apple greens, blouses with V necks, with turtle necks and Peter Pan collars, with double welting and extra pockets, man-tailored styling and eased yokes; one blouse had french cuffs and an exquisite embroidered appliqué. All easy care, drip-dry, and guaranteed permanently fresh. She tried them all on, but they felt uncomfortable, and in the mirror she could see that none of them "looked like" her. She bought one only out of politeness, choosing the cheapest.

At home she found a letter. It said,

Dear Mom,

I'm sorry to disappoint you but I guess we won't be coming for our visit after all. I suppose I should say that we aren't feeling well or that the children don't want to leave their friends, but isn't it time we started being honest? Home life was never that joyful, but now I hear it's deteriorated. Dad is unhappy, but you don't even try. Maybe you just don't care. A man has his pride, after all! . . ." And there was more.

Not many weeks later her husband came home early

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from work and invited her out for a drive. He seemed extraordinarily cheerful; she understood why when they were ushered into the offices of his lawyer. She had been brought there to consent to a divorce settlement: it seemed that her husband intended to marry the bleach-blonde divorcée.

"Emily lives very simply," said her husband.

"You'll be adequately cared for," said the lawyer, averting his eyes. "You don't need much."

Her husband went directly to a hotel. At home Emily sat for a long time, trying to recall whether things had always been truly so dreadful or whether they had only recently become so. Professionally cordial when it appeared she would make no trouble, the lawyer had given her his buck-up speech. Look at the bright side, he had said. Forget about failure. A new beginning. It's all up to you. You are your own master.

If it was all up to her, couldn't she get rid of the blouse? She took it off and examined it. Not only was it unbecoming but it was shabby from much washing and badly frayed. How easy it would be to rip it to shreds and be free of it! She was her own master. Yes, she would certainly rip it to shreds, tomorrow or the day after.

And then, because she was feeling rather cold, she put it on again. □

6. THE CAT THAT HAD THE POWER OF SPEECH

by Marian Ury

A cat came to the home of a couple in Piedmont, California, and said, "I want." It was a pretty cat, with round bright eyes and orange fur, a bushy tail, a snub nose, and the short legs and sturdy frame that, when the body was properly fleshed out, would entitle it to be described as "cobby," an aristocratic term. It was raining; the cat was shivering, and even if it had been an ugly cat the couple, who were kind-hearted, would surely have brought out something for it to eat. As it was they let it in and conducted it to the kitchen, the husband preceding and the wife following behind with a towel to wipe the muddy paw-prints from the floor. "I want," said the cat. "Nice kitty," said the wife, pouring a saucer of milk. "Do you suppose it's all right?" said the husband. He was a lawyer and by this utterance was referring simultaneously to the health of the cat considered from the cat's point-of-view, the inconvenience to themselves in the likelihood that it should die—for its meager belly was quaking violently—and the Law of Found Property. It had occurred to him that the cat might be claimed as his if no other owner came forward—but suppose someone did? He felt uneasy. "I want," repeated the cat, which had polished off the milk and now shook droplets from its whiskers onto the kitchen wall. "Nice kitty," said the woman, and opened a can of tuna. "Let me," said her husband, spooning it onto a plate. The cat polished that off too, said "I want"—or perhaps it said "I love you" (which is the same thing)—wiped its face, pillowed its head on a paw, and suddenly fell asleep.

Husband and wife both had always longed for a cat, though neither had ever spoken of it, and now that they had one that was handsome, that despite the husband's fears was in no immediate danger of death, and that moreover had the power of speech, they were thrilled. The next afternoon the husband felt himself growing vague while instructing a client on a delicate point of law. Pleading a sore throat he hurried home and found the cat curled up, nose to tail in what is known as the "contented cat position" on a cushion. True, it was that of his favorite chair. "It said, 'I want,' " said his wife apologetically. "Nice kitty," said the husband. Already the cat looked fatter, its fur glossier, its whiskers longer and whiter. It seemed, in fact, likely to become quite a proper cat. Husband and wife watched with pride as it slept, its paw-tips twitching.

The woman, childless despite many years of marriage, thought the cat would be company as she did her chores, and she set herself to train it to follow her around the house. "Now kitty," she would say, "I'm going to dust the sofa legs and give the cushions a good shaking," or "Now kitty, I'm going to sort the silver and stack the napkins." The cat was not attentive, preferring to eat and sleep at its leisure, stalk birds in the garden, investigate closets, the undersides of chairs, and the tops of tables. But perhaps the reason was that her tasks were not that interesting. Still she tried. Once, too vigorous, she grazed its tail with the vacuum cleaner. "Ouch," it cried, "it hurts, it hurts!" and turned and sank a fang into her knee. "I'm sorry, kitty," she said, trembling. "I want," said the cat. She fed it, and after a while it went to sleep.

Despite this failure the woman thought she should train the cat. If only it could be made to expand its vocabulary: then it could expeditiously be told the difference between a bench—meant to be sat on—and a table-top—forbidden.

MARIAN URY is a sometime translator from Chinese and Japanese who lives in Oakland. Her fiction has appeared in Prairie Schooner *and* California Quarterly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She tried to show it her reasons. "Now kitty," she would say, "it's all right to sharpen your claws on the doormat, but the rug you absolutely mustn't." Or, "Now kitty, you may bite on the knitting yarn, but the lamp cord—no!" But the cat did not seem to understand and only repeated "I want" until it was fed more tuna, or let out of doors, or allowed to jump onto her husband's favorite chair. The man, too, tried to instruct it; he came home early these days, often feeling unwell. In his office his thoughts turned to the furry creature at home and he grew vague; once he found himself mumbling nonsense to an important client. "I want," said the cat, ensconced at that moment on their bed; extending a paw it snagged a corner of the bedspread. "No kitty, nice kitty," the man said. He was feeling unwell indeed, with a headache and a scratchy throat. "I want, I want," screamed the cat, seized the fringe and began to gnaw. "Kitty, mustn't!" said the woman. "I want, I want," it shouted, ripping a swathe from the fringe, wrapping it around its hind legs and hurling itself convulsively onto the rug. Husband and wife looked at each other. "It's been awfully bad-tempered lately," she said timidly. "Do you suppose it's all right?" he asked, and they rushed it to the vet.

The vet had a bristling beard and a manly manner. He poked and prodded the cat, squeezed its belly, took its temperature, gave it for good measure a rabies shot and one against feline enteritis. The cat said nothing but squirmed and whimpered. "There's nothing wrong with it," said the vet. "It's a perfectly normal cat." "I really don't care about the bedspread," said the wife, though she did. "Nor do I," said her husband patting her hand, though he did. The effort of comforting each other, greater than they had made in years, exhausted them, and they drove home without further speech.

The woman fed the cat kidney, to apologize for the insult. The man fed it tuna, because it had whimpered. It took some bites of each, leaped on the table, attacked the rug, chewed the lamp-cord, and leaped onto the favorite chair, where it went to sleep. The husband stayed home the next day; he lay in bed with a high fever. The cat ate and slept at its leisure, stalked and caught a bird, disarranged a closet, clawed the underside of the sofa, gnawed the curtains, and left paw-prints on the dining-room table. Only once did the wife venture to reproach it. It had just leaped onto her husband's favorite chair and was sharpening its claws on the back before settling down to sleep. "Oh kitty," she said, "sometimes I think you're just not trying to communicate." "Are you out of your mind?" cried the cat in a loud, clear, and remarkably ungracious voice. It never spoke again. □

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

HOW TO SURVIVE HEAVEN

I was touching her where she'd never been touched.
The devil was in me. I said:
"If there is no more to heaven than this
    I am as good as a dead man."
And she said "What did you have in mind?"

So I opened one door on a white blizzard of stars
and one to an avalanche of green that was our spring.
When I opened a third we lost our solitude
    to a grey parade of souls come down on a rainbow.
"You think big," she said, "beyond immortality and bliss."

Then this woman, with a wisdom beyond her years,
(I'm sure that she has been to heaven before
    and knows the ins and outs)
gave me fair warning:
"Lie to the angels about your dreams

        or they will confiscate them at the gates
and banish them to the bedrooms of the world.
If there are ghosts around us, love,
        they are dead men's dreams
no saint could smuggle into paradise."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Story by Elizabeth Anton

BARE TREES

Rain drops run together on the window pane; rivulets flow into bigger streams, like the rivers on the maps in geography books. Nora taps at the pane to see if she can make more drops run together. Outside the trees shake, bare and wet in the spring rain.

Gingerbread cooking smells downstairs. Nora closes the book and, stepping every second step so they won't creak, sneaks down. In the dull light above the stove, the only light on, grandmother rocks back and forth rolling dark dough on a white board. One arm is thicker than the other; three summers before Nora was born, she broke it hanging curtains in the kitchen. She slipped from the counter, she said, onto the floor. The bone cracked right below the elbow. Nora pictures her sprawled on the floor, arm snapped off like a broken teapot handle. She has never seen a broken bone.

Molasses spreads from the bottle, next to three egg shells and a flour-covered mixing bowl. Grandmother looks over her shoulder, smiles. "Thought I heard someone; only thought it was a goblin," she says, still rolling the dough. When she smiles the skin around her eyes cracks like dough around raisins.

Grandmother plucks a thimble from her paisley apron and Nora cuts fairy cookies, gently prying the dough from the thimble in neat lines onto the cookie sheet. Grandmother hums "Moon River." The refrigerator hums when she doesn't; its door is lined with post cards from Austria—where Nora's parents are: pictures of snow-covered mountains; men making cheese; girls in hats, with puffed-sleeve blouses and long skirts; pictures with maps and pictures of cities with churches, fountains, fat naked statues. Her mother fills the back of the cards with tiny print which Nora squints to read. Her father's hand is scrawled, slanted. Sometimes he just sends an itinerary—they are very far away.

"You done all your geography?" Grandmother asks, handing her the bowl to dry. Her wrinkled hands under the grey filmy water are gummy, like erasers, dough lodged beneath her thin fingernails. Nora nods, then catches herself and says, "Almost."

Great Aunt Martha is in the TV room with Walter Cronkite. Grandmother and Martha sit on the ends of the stuffed green couch, Nora in the middle. They sit in the same dents they made the night before.

Martha's hair hangs in strings onto a white towel she's draped around her shoulders like a shawl. Every Wednesday she dyes her hair with tea and Nora is not allowed in the upstairs bathroom for two hours. Her cigarette glows, a third eye in the dark room, blinking as she puffs. "Pompous ass," she says after Eric Sevareid, grinding the cigarette out.

"That's the way it is," says Walter. And Martha goes silently back up to her room to smoke and read newspapers shaped like magazines, followed by Mr. Humphrey, a striped cat with unblinking eyes. Nora wonders how Aunt Martha and Grandmother could be sisters.

"Can I brush your hair tonight?" asks Nora when Grandmother shuts off the TV. Her hair is white on top but hangs ginger brown where her blouse meets her skirt. It smells vanilla.

First they finish the dishes. Grandmother's fat arm is weak, so Nora holds the plates while Grandmother stacks them behind glass doors criss-crossed with metal. In a special locked drawer, in a black leather case lined with velvet, are Grandmother's demi-tasse spoons: fairy spoons with flower and bird handles, very small. She takes them out to polish. They are her mother's mother's mother's. "You'll get them, Nora, when I die." Nora shakes her head No. "You must; they're heirlooms."

Mornings when Nora goes out to get the milk bottles, Mr. Humphrey waits beside his evening's catch for the door to open. Dead chipmunks, their shoulders ripped, heads thrown back, buck teeth—like Martha.

ELIZABETH ANTON is a graduate student at the University of New Hampshire. This is her first published fiction.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nora opens the screen door and Mr. Humphrey sits, holding a limp rabbit by the neck. She takes the rabbit, quiet, trembling, staring. He tries to spring. "Hold him just tight enough, Nora; but not enough to hurt," says Grandmother, standing over her. "The best way is to hold them by the neck," and she picks the animal up, his one leg dangling, the other kicking air.

Nora holds the rabbit while Grandmother bandages his hurt leg with tape to a Popsicle stick. His sleek small shoulders are tense. His back leg scrapes deep into Nora's arm. She tries to hold him, even though she bleeds.

"Good fighter, anyway—not so good as having a dog; but that cat can fight," says Martha, her lipstick lumpy red in the morning. She wears suits with jackets like a man's and stockings with seams up the back of her skinny legs. Her tea-dyed hair is curled tight—a helmet, black eyebrows sharp, like someone filed them. She works in the bank.

"That rabbit's going to give us fleas," says Martha, looking at the rabbit gnawing lettuce in a shoe box on the seat next to Nora. She drops a teaspoon of sugar neatly in her cup and sips, not bothering to stir.

"Now, Martha," says grandmother. "After all, it was your cat that brought him in."

Nora hears the sugar from her spoon drizzle on the table as she brings it to her bowl. She sprinkles it on the mountain of oatmeal, makes a dent with her spoon, fills the lake, watching rivers run into the bowl.

"Girl should do more numbers," says Martha. Martha has a black plastic book for checks she works on each night. She's tried for a week to make Nora understand balances.

Jesus H. Christ. Your old lady is the ugliest thing since the Crawling Eye," says the girl riding her bike around the turnaround at the end of Nora's street.

"Not my old lady," says Nora.

"Who then?"

"My old aunt." The girl's hair is straw blond and pulled back in a spikey pony tail. She wears a dark blue Catholic school uniform and a short-sleeve white shirt. Even her arms have freckles.

"I know a good place to swim—want to go? Malcolm can't find us there."

"Who?"

"My big brother."

Marie has five brothers and two sisters. When they have to take the littlest, Max, with them, Marie pulls him behind in a red wagon. He clings to the side giggling, says, "Faster, faster." On hills Marie sits in the wagon holding him between her legs, steering with the long black handle.

Near the river, in a vacant lot—jungle of dead vines and weeds—they build a tree fort. They haul a broken door from Marie's garage and some old planks in her wagon. They fit them in the crotch of a dead oak tree, with a splintered yellow sign hanging tilted on one nail. They paint the floor yellow, set up shelves with bricks, fill them with boxes of strawberry and raspberry Jell-o sneaked from the kitchen.

Marie has an extra credit project for the Mary Knoll nuns at her school. She and Nora go from door to door in the neighborhood selling Korean orphans. The new parents get a picture of the child. They send clothes and money and letters and the orphan writes back. Nora sold to the sixth grade a girl who would have a new set of parents (twenty-six) to send letters to each year.

"I'm never going to have babies," says Marie, opening a packet of Jell-o. It is quiet except for gulls. They watch the sun set over the junior high. "Too much trouble; easier to buy them." She sits Indian style, puts the packet on the floor between them. They lick their fingers, stick them in the open packet, lick them again, smacking—raspberry, sweet and red.

Marie's mother—a pretty lady with black hair and freckles, thin in a cotton dress which doesn't cover her slip—darts back and forth from table to stove. She spoons up mounds of canned corn and carrots. Nora sits next to Malcolm on the end of the picnic bench at a long table. He grabs handfuls of salad from the bowl across the table—greasy knuckles, ragged nails. When Nora turns her head, he sneaks bites of cake off her plate. Marie tells him to cool it or he'll find his family jewels where his tonsils are. Her mother runs over and whacks her on the head for that.

Grandmother breaks peas at the top of the pod with her thumb, pushes them out into the pot. Her bad arm lies quiet on her lap, empty. When she tries to lift the pot or sip her tea, it shakes, so she steadies it with her other hand. She glares at it—a traitor. She drapes sweaters around her shoulders, not putting her arm in the sleeves, to hide and protect. She holds it to her stomach sometimes, like a hurt animal; or rests it on her lap, the other hand on top. Her hand no longer fits around the swollen wrist. When people come over, she wears long puffy sleeves.

Grandmother runs water over the peas, puts the pot on the stove and places the good, wet hand firmly on Nora's neck. "Nora, dear, there are certain things you are going to have to learn sooner or later. First, look at your nails." Nora stares at the black beneath her fingernails, then glares out the window at Albert, the rabbit, in his chicken wire cage. He's getting fat. "These are things you must consider when you get to be a young lady; you could start thinking about them now." Nora wonders where she will get to be a young lady. "Clean person, clean mind, my mother used to tell me. You might clean up your manners, too. I don't like the way you've been answering the phone lately. Men will notice that, you know."

Martha shuffles through the Sunday paper on the counter. "Oh, stop preaching husbands. The girl will have something if she learns her numbers. I just don't think that damned mackerel snapper is doing her any good."

Nora jumps up, slams the screen door behind, letting it slap the frame twice. She hears her grandmother saying, "I just don't know what to do, I just don't know," imagines her shaking her head like she does over burned peas.

Marie's raincoat is too short and her boots are different kinds. "It's colder than a witch's tit," says Marie. Nora

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

splashes her. "Colder than my aunt's tit," she says. Marie doubles over, giggling. They race to the rabbit cage.

Behind the screen of the cage, Albert sits nibbling the remains of a carrot they left two days ago. Six pink clumps are scattered at his feet, beneath a film of water. Nora looks closer. They look like mice. He—she—didn't even move the bunnies from the puddle.

Marie covers her mouth with her fist. Her face is wet, from rain or tears—Nora isn't sure. "I guess that's what happens when you have too many," she says.

"Eat more," says grandmother, holding the bowl of mashed potatoes in her good arm. On the table is an antique vase of fresh cut flowers. Peas, carrots, bread, gravy and cranberry jelly line the end of the lace-covered table in front of the roast chicken. All morning, all the next day, the whole house smells like chicken.

Marie sits across from Nora in the guest seat. She puts her fork down, takes a deep breath, looks over at Nora widening her eyes as though all this food would push them from her head. "Have more gravy," Grandmother tells Marie, passing it to her; it's cold, lumpy.

"It tastes bad," she says, still eye level with her potatoes and carrots. Nora chokes back a giggle, starts to cough. Grandmother blushes. Aunt Martha squints through her smoke and steamy tea.

Grandmother carries in a thick lemon cake. Marie pushes her icing around with the back of her fork. "Can we go back out now?" she asks.

Grandmother nods, "No more cake?"

"Thank you very much that was good," Marie says flatly. Nora pushes her chair out to leave.

In bed Nora waits for the bells, for morning; she counts ten on both hands. If she climbed the steeple in the middle of the night, drove an iron spike into the lighted clock face moon round and bright, would things stop?

She can't sleep in moonlight with the bright bars cast through the window across the heavy quilt; too heavy. She sees the rabbit cage from her window. The trapped rabbit nibbles, gnaws himself fatter and fatter every day, bloated in moonlight.

She listens to breathing in the next room; Grandmother's breathing in the double bed: slow, raspy, muffled. Nora listens again for the breathing.

She cannot remember her mother's face. She has had nightmares about her mother: her mother sits across from her at a table, candle-lit. Her mother looks up from her plate, her water glass, looks up but does not see her, does not know her, with eyes clear, black and empty.

Nora sits and drops her feet on the floor, crosses to a picture of her mother, a picture taken when she was in high school. She pulls her hair back from her forehead, like the dark woman in the picture. The eyes, wide, thick lidded, are Nora's eyes. Same nose, small but straight. Same teeth, big and straight, the spaces too wide between. Same high, sharp cheek bones. She sets the picture back, next to her own framed reflection. She hears the breathing, slow and uncertain.

She must get out. Every second step, she steps downstairs. The house is still and warm, windows locked. Night smells different from day smells: gingerbread, powder, fresh linen, something kept too long in closets, old perfume—the kind Grandmother wore when she met Grandfather.

Plates stacked behind glass doors gleam in the porch light. Something taps at the window—Marie. Nora opens the door to a soft breeze.

"Hey stupid. It's me; come on out." Nora grabs a coat. "Listen, let's go swimming—it's pretty warm."

All houses' lights are out. "Listen, I gotta go away with my family for a few weeks—maybe a month or so," Marie blurts. "So it's my last night. We got to do something special." She holds out two M 80's in her palm that she's ripped off her brother. "Hey," she nudges Nora. "Hey, I'll be back." Nora doesn't answer. "Want to hear a good mackerel snapper joke?" Nora shrugs, not much caring. "Priests can kiss nuns so long as they don't get into the habit."

Nora giggles. "Last time I heard that one I fell off my dinosaur," she says.

They take off their shoes, walk barefoot on the soft dirt to the riverbank. Nora mashes an old piece of bubble gum between her fingers in the raincoat pocket. They cut off the path, through the woods, to the tree with the rope. The river is covered with cotton-thick mist.

Marie peels off her cut-offs and T-shirt first. She grabs the tree branch and climbs up, clinging to the bark with her toes, her rear full and white. She stands on the branch above the river, arms out from her side—knees bent, balancing over the water. Then she takes the rope in her hands, wraps her legs around. Swings out, pale as china. She sweeps, a pendulum, hangs and drops.

Nora follows. Pieces of bark drop far below. On the branch, gripping, the rough bark slips, crumbling beneath her toes, through her fingers. She crouches. Everything high and dizzy. She takes the rope, rough and dry, scratchy in her hand and between her legs. Springs. The water hits, blue-black and ice. She pushes up from the bottom, up into the mist and swims slowly through dark quiet to shore.

Nora walks up the soft mud and sits next to Marie, shivering. Marie sits cross-legged, hands on her knees. Her wet hair is swept back from her forehead, blue eyes glow. She sits straight, her skin glossy satin in moonlight. The bones poke up below her stomach. Her breasts have only nipples, hard red—tree buds. Her chin straight, a few wisps of hair at her mouth; Nora thinks Marie is not afraid of anything. Nora swallows at a lump in her throat—something caught there, like a lump of chicken.

Marie picks a sharp pebble from the ground, scrapes it back and forth across her wrist, frowning. "We gotta be blood sisters, Nora." Nora looks around for a stick.

"Christ, that won't work," says Marie, tossing the stone into the river. "It's just not sharp enough." They decide that if they pick their scabs, they'll get blood. Nora scrapes where she fell this morning bringing in milk; Marie scrapes her ankle. They rub together ankle and knee, sticky and warm.

Leaves tremble. Marie slides her arm around Nora's shoulder, holds her wet and warm. Her soft shoulder pushes Nora to the moist ground. She is bony, sleek. They shiver.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They kiss, first on the cheek, then mouth. They hold each other tighter and tighter in soft leaves. Marie's breath is warm and soft on her shoulder, sweet as bubble gum. They hold each other, kiss again. They sleep together, toes in the cold water, but warm until the sky goes soft gray.

They pull on their clothes—damp, clinging, chilly—run to the fort and scramble up through the vines. Marie gets the strawberry Jell-o, Nora gets lime. The sun comes blurry orange over the river. Nora feels the lump in her throat again. She swallows, but it goes to tears. "How come anything any good never lasts?" she says. "Everything gets old and rotten."

" 'Cept for us," says Marie, hugging her knees. The white crescent of her underwear shows through her baggy T-shirt. She still hasn't put on her jeans. She lifts two fingers, strawberry stained, crosses herself, "Domini nos quo bisquo. Ecom spiri tu, tu all."

"Bet I can beat you playing dominoes," chants Nora, softly.

She thinks Marie already gone. They walk together, silent, to Marie's house.

"Listen, kid," Marie says in Bogart, "I'm only as far as the post office."

Nora picks up the milk bottles, opens the kitchen door. She glances in the mirror for a change in her face, a clue—Nothing. She hangs her coat before Grandmother, coming down the stairs in her blue bathrobe, asks, "Did you sleep all right?" She presses Nora to her shoulder, to the stale sour morning smell. She holds her, Nora thinks, a little too long.

Iced tea glasses sweat. Grandmother dabs at her forehead with a bright orange handkerchief, the fat useless arm resting on the lawn chair. "Too hot to cook tonight; we'll just have beans and cold ham," she says, snapping the beans.

"Cheaper, too," says Martha, looking up from her book, vacation reading. She's torn off the front cover. The trees do not move. "I bet it's cooler in Austria," she says. "I've heard in Austria they even wear fur coats in the summer, it's so cool. All the nice cold air coming off the mountains—that's what does it. Snow sometimes even in the middle of July. The lakes are clear blue; good swimming." Albert pants, furry fat in his cage.

Inside, the refrigerator door is over-filled with postcards. Glossy blues, green—shiny and overwhelming. Her parents will be home in two months.

"Maybe now that you've got more time, Nora, you'd like to learn some of the important things young ladies should know—quilting, knitting." She pulls back Nora's hair, rests her worn hand on Nora's neck. Aunt Martha crumples her pack of Marlboros and shakes her head. "Of all the damned silly things to learn," she clucks her tongue.

Nora thinks of Marie, pictures her like a snapshot: blond hair damp, head back and laughing in the early morning. Nora thinks they could run to Austria. No, it's too late to run. School starts soon.

Maybe you'd do well at a bank. That's if you learn your numbers," says Martha. "I bet when you get older I could find you a job there. You'd have to start at the bottom, of course. That's where I started, that's how I got to where I am."

Nora lays the china cups carefully around the table. Then she puts out the silver and napkins, goes to the kitchen to turn on tea water. Grandmother polishes the spoons with one hand, her swollen arm useless at her side. She hums a wordless tune again and again, polishing spoons. She polishes them every day now, sometimes twice a day. Her hands, pink and rubbery from polish and water, move slowly. She holds them up, gleaming, in the kitchen light. "Pick one, pick two, pick three—they'll be yours, all yours, dear, all yours."

She wears a copper bracelet on each arm. She says they keep arthritis away. She says that it's so. She saw it on the news, during Walter. She doesn't take them off, even at night, though they blacken her skin underneath.

Nora walks down Marie's path, the lawn tangled and overgrown with weeds. A bug-eyed snotty little boy with feeted pajamas opens the door. He holds a box of Captain Crunch torn at the bottom. Cereal sprinkles out. Nora trips over giant Lego blocks in the livingroom. "You're going to need firecrackers to blast her out of bed. That's after you blast your way through all the crap in her room." Marie's mother shouts from the kitchen. The house smells of stale milk.

"Hi."

Marie turns from her dresser where she sits in front of a mirror, fists on her cheek, staring. She smiles a little and says, "What do you think?" Nora doesn't answer. "It's Yardley Peachy—like it? Or wait. This is City Slicker—like it better?" She twists up a silver stick.

"How was your summer?" Nora asks politely.

"Divine," says Marie, stretching up on her toes then walking slowly over to her bed where she lies out on her back, arms over her head, ankles crossed. Her mouth is blurry; she yawns again. "I met all kinds of people. The weather was terrif. Mark said we never had a summer like this one. Of course we went sailing every day." She frowns at her nails. "Have you ever had a screwdriver—yum, they're good. Orange juice and let me see, vodka—I think, or is it gin? Anyway."

Marie's tan legs are shaved smooth, bare. She props herself up on her elbows, throws her head back, shakes her hair.

Nora squints in the sharp sunlight, at the end of Marie's driveway. She looks down at her penny-loafers. She can still see her feet, her hairy knobby legs. She goes to the river, too cold to go barefoot on the path.

The leaves on top of the trees are pale, the lower ones still fresh green. Vines sway in the empty fort, paint peeling.

She cuts in back of her house, past the cage, the bloated rabbit. The rope swings out from the tree in the breeze, brown and empty. She squats by the shore in soft mud, picks sharp pebbles and tosses them into her own reflection. There seems to be so little to look forward to, she thinks. Each stone hits, sending circles quietly out to die. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PETER WILD

HARBORING CRIMINALS

For years he watches the moon, a white
glob of butter racing back and forth,
lost dog over the frozen furrows
of the old carriage road, stopping to listen
to the starved turkeys crowing in the swamp.
he expects to see George Washington,
arms folded, floating through the forest
on a wheelbarrow, a rainbow cloud.
                but although he throws out
a handful of grain now and then
with bits of ribbons, old bolts,
he has never left his place in the sky,
magnetized to it, fearing the fence he built
some time ago down from the house
to keep the ships out, knowing he might
tear his belly, soft as a sneaker
passing over the pickets to feed, a bandit
licking his own light still left in the sky
falling from behind onto the flowers
beneath the windows. he knows the house
has grown too hard to take nails. but prefers
instead to sit through his long retirement
drinking thinned furnace oil, reading old newspapers,
as if he might re-create a world, until
                the slump-backed car
comes speeding on the road, just as expected,
steel alley of a comet at the head of its smoke,
winds up the hill. the boys and
grim girl jump out, waving machine guns
in imitation of Chinese characters, drag
the bags of money past him into the house,
snarl that if he tells they'll slash his throat,
but spend the rest of their lives thereafter
counting the money, fornicating barefoot in the attic,
demand only that he cut them slices
of sandwich bread with his bloated hand
stuck in them for lunch. though
after years he notices the girl up late,
lips and eyes closed floating up and down
the staircase in his wife's dresses, wearing
her high heels, out on the lawn collecting the dog's
cold bones, the boys in parts of his tuxedo,
in his old railroad cap, leaning on tiptoes
from the sills, waving their white arms.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Story by Rae-Jolene Smith

THE DISAPPEARANCE

Shortly after the New Year the cold began to hurt. It was blue most of the time, particularly at dusk. I walked out in it, stumbling in the dunes of snow, blinded by the pale harsh glare. I wasn't afraid. No one followed.

Twelve below zero, the night I disappeared.

One autumn the poplars turned early. My husband's voice was a surprise, my husband's footsteps were quick and heavy. Where are you, he called, lusty as a new, young lover, where are you, making a song of it, you're home, aren't you, where are you, I said where are you—*where are you?* Footsteps, the surprise of his weight on the kitchen floorboards, the surprise of his presence. On his wrist shone an expensive watch, the face big as a silver dollar: the time was 2:20.

That jubilant high-pitched enraged voice, calling my name. My name. Mine. Calling my name as he ran through the downstairs rooms, where are you, you're not home, are you, you're not here, are you?—are you? Liar! Bitch! The empty living-room. The beige sofa, the tremulous drapes, the dark carpet he had soiled with his muddy shoes. No time to notice. Opening the closet door—pawing the things inside—slamming the door again. Desperate, enraged. Where are you? Where are you? Is someone here with you? At the foot of the stairs, my name. Ah love! The violence of his love!

Are you upstairs? Is someone up there with you?

He had come home hours early, he had taken the afternoon off: for love. Only for love. Anguish, desire, rage, pleading in his murderous voice, his young triumphant despairing lust. My name on the stairs, three steps at a time: where are you? where are you? where are you?

Disappeared.

The bedroom, empty. Cheap orange-rust bedspread, white organdy curtains, his headless body framed for a rushed moment in the bureau mirror, dark tie whipped back over his shoulder—half-consciously he noticed it, pulled it back and adjusted it, adjusted the knot as well. A dread of appearing disheveled. A dread of being laughed at.

You're not home, are you, are you, he muttered, wiping at his nose with his balled fist, swaying in the center of the room, not certain which way to turn. His torso in the mirror: heaving. Young and muscular and heaving with life.

Bathroom?

He pushed at the door and it swung open. Cracked against the wall. Bathroom empty, mirror splashed from shaving soap that morning, an apparition filling the doorway, past which he could not see. The terrible roaring of blood in his ears. Why? Where? What will happen? What will he do—? Through the three-by-two bathroom window he saw the straggly row of poplars in our neighbor's back yard. A light frost the night before, unusually early for this climate. Leaves already turning yellow, yellow-brown.

Where are you?

Devil's paintbrush on the rocky hill beneath Mrs. Coole's house: I picked some for a bouquet of wild flowers. Perhaps she watched me from her kitchen. Spied on me. Querulous old woman, nobody's grandmother, over-charging me for the attic room I rented, always asking me questions about my family, my friends, my "line of work." I stammered the truth, too cowardly to lie. The truth was ordinary, the truth was unexceptional, yet she stood with her arms folded across her breasts, frowning, staring, judging. Had I prospects of marriage, she wished to know. There was more than one young man seeing me, wasn't there, she had heard voices upstairs long past midnight, hadn't she, just last night; what did that mean? I blushed, I heard myself stammering like a child, one of them is only a friend, he teaches at the grammar school with me, he's just a friend, I'm sorry if we disturbed you. There's more than one, Mrs. Coole said. Short brittle black hairs sprouted from her upper lip. Her eyes gleamed sadly in the fatty contours of her face. Nobody's mother, nobody's grandmother. Pity. She wished to touch me, perhaps—did not dare. Questioned me about the other boarders, poor dwarfish Miss Sudbury who had worked for fifteen years at an insurance agency downtown, Mr. Keough who worked at the bank as an assistant manager, Audrey Price, my age, who was taking courses at the

---

RAE-JOLENE SMITH lives in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. She works at an "immense backbreaking garden" and short stories which are also appearing in Yale Review *and* Western Humanities Review.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Select Secretarial School. Did they prepare food in their rooms, did they complain behind her back, had they plans for moving out—? What sort of friends did they have? I mumbled replies and ran upstairs, my face burning. Awful old woman! Never will I be your age!

Who is the other one, the one in the little red car like a toy, looks Italian, or maybe Greek, he's got that loud laugh that carries all over the house?—is he your fiancé, that one? Are you serious about him?

My face burned. I brushed hair out of my face, I laughed, I pitied her because in another moment I would escape her, in another few months I would be moving out.

Do you love him?—*him?* Is that the one you'll marry?

Eight years later, prowling, hunting, a little drunk at three in the afternoon, lovely lovely woman's image glimpsed in the plate glass store-windows, glimpsed in certain eyes. Lovely blond lady. There was an Indian medical student, rented a basement apartment on Tuller Avenue just north of the University, twenty-nine years old and he looked nineteen, with his olive-golden skin and his thick black hair and his anxious exaggerated smile, his infatuation, his courtly clumsiness. He might have been imitating Americans; he might have been parodying them. From Benares. Family in trade, in shipping. Wealth? Possibly. Lovely lovely lady, so blond. With him those four or five times, in his basement apartment, in his sofa-bed, I embraced only my husband, I found only him, again, always, in this young man's overheated flesh. Again and again, sinking down with him, sinking beneath him, overwhelmed. Again. And again. My name. His. His angry eyes, the befuddlement of his voice, his accusations, his despair. I embraced one man in my desperation. I woke in the arms of another. Dark swarthy quick-tempered insane. Husband. I wept in my lover's arms, in anyone's arms, a little drunk on white wine, broken-faced, quite ugly, shameless, wanting to speak only about my marriage, my husband, myself.

Eight years later. Then nine. Then ten.

A miscarriage in the third year: a blessing, we both said, because he had just graduated from law school and had a very precarious position with a law firm in the suburbs. A blessing, we said. But I wept and he wept. He was bewildered, angry. The drinking began then. I think it began then. From nine until six at work, and work brought home with him, briefs, papers, accounts, he was angry and triumphant, he bought himself attractive, costly clothes, knowing he must compete with the sons of Anglo-Saxons, knowing how scrupulously they watched him and examined his work. The miscarriage was a blessing, he insisted. His hands shook. His eyes were ringed with fatigue. Brothers and sisters and cousins of his back in Boston, both parents dead, thank God, he was spared the excruciating shame of having to love them and being unable to tolerate them: his mother especially, he claimed, since she had never learned English at all. Had never learned it except for a few words! In this country twenty years and never learned English!

For his blond wife he bought a Persian lamb coat on installments, and a pale green Buick on installments, and a wristwatch with several tiny diamonds arranged around the face, and a small brick house at the edge of a fairly good residential neighborhood. Car, suits with vests, good shoes, neckties, hair trimmed every two weeks, a garnet ring for himself. How normal he was, and how dedicated to the law.

We'll have a baby in another year or two, he said.

One of them I told about my husband's jealousy, his rages. His vicious temper. Telephoning me during the day, at home, to see if I'm home. Accusing me of seeing other men, inviting other men to the house. Driving home during the day, in mid-afternoon, to check on me. Once I was in the basement and I heard him run into the house, heard him yelling my name, a madman yelling my name, I knew he would kill me, I was innocent but I knew he would kill me, strangle me in his misery, I hid in the basement sobbing, so frightened, so helpless, until he came downstairs and found me and called my name again, baffled, hurt—why hadn't I answered him?—why had I frightened him so? I loved him, didn't I?

I disappeared into the powdery delicacy of the snow. Of January. Such crystalline fineness: vast clean bright desert. The river partly frozen. Sunlight snapped the ice, snapped the frozen twigs of the poplar trees. Wave-like gestures in the snow. Boots that came to my knee, zipped. What legend, what voice, what fingers trailed in the snow, what sense to the splash of blood? Bootprints. Animal tracks. Shadows slantwise, deepening into twilight, turning an extraordinary dusky blue. Everything glaring, glowing. Blue. The wind begins again, sharp and musical. There is no sunlight now. Subtlety and variety of shapes now blurring, fading. So cold!—hurting cold! Inhuman.

Did I imagine the splash of blood, the bright freezing clots?

One of them, the last one, instructed me shrewdly in the pattern of my own fate.

We seek our opposites, he said, in order to complete ourselves. But the antithetical self can be too powerful—can swallow us up.

Do you understand?

I had no husband. It was a lie.

I call to the one least like me, the one who wrenches me out of myself.

I lay in my lover's arms, in one motel room or another, and I gloried in his being so brotherly, so ordinary a man. I spoke to him longingly of the other, the forbidden husband. He was patient, he kissed me, he seemed actually to be interested. A woman's husband, after all, is a safeguard. As was his wife, and his four children. I confused their names. Not deliberately. I was sometimes a little high, never really drunk, but I did confuse the names and even, once or twice,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his name. He pretended not to hear.

He was the last one, the final lover.

I squirmed in his arms, eel-like, laughing. I told him of the others: not individuals now but a mass, sullen and brotherly. Names confused. And your husband knows nothing, he said, amazed, and I said of course he knows, he has known all along, he knew before any of it began. Laughing, I kissed his stomach, his thighs, I pressed my face against him, blinded, suffocating. My husband's hand guided me, his fingers hard against the back of my head, my hair bunched, the tendons of my neck resisting. No. I won't. I don't want to. I hate it. I hate. But with my lover I laughed, small wild shouts of laughter disturbed the room, the lazy stuffy dusk of the room, and I felt his tensing, his fear of me, of my love. So hungry! I sobbed, I gagged, I would have suffocated. He groaned, jerking. Helpless. He did not want me to love him like this, none of them did, really, I was too reckless, too shrill, and afterward gloating, wet-faced. My eyes must have frightened them.

I love you, I whispered. You. Only you.

I love you, they said.

The last one loved me more than any of the others. I knew. I could tell. His voice trembled, his eyes misted over. Flabby-bellied, the father of four children, a handsome ruined face, an afternoon drinker like myself, afraid of dying. Sudden death. His brother had died of a coronary thrombosis, he said; the first time we were together he told me of that death, shy, intimidated by my ferocity, my tears, my wracking heaving pleasure: died at the age of 41. Unbelievable. Truly unbelievable. He was several years older and not in good condition, easily winded, overweight by ten or twelve or fifteen pounds.

I don't want to die, oh my God, he whispered.

Nobody will die, I vowed.

On his elbows he leaned above me, sighing. We should never have begun this, he said. We're getting in too deep. I yawned and slipped my arms around his neck and would have drawn him back down, but he resisted; his body stiffened as if a thought had pierced it. Later he accused me of thinking of my husband at all times, of being in love with him, only him.

I don't love anyone, I screamed.

My teeth were chattering with the sudden cold.

I call to the one least like me, I said, invisible, walking through the city. No one knew me here. I was nearly a hundred miles from home. Yet everywhere I saw familiar faces. A former lover, a former husband. Childhood acquaintances. My parents: there. I was not drunk. The unexpected cold had sobered me. Eight above zero, the Bank of America sign proclaimed, January 15, all is well. If I were a widow. But there were children, whose names I scrambled. Close about me were strangers with near-familiar faces, eying me. I was very shy. I was maidenly, contrite. They let me pass without touching me.

My lover had driven away alone. Did we quarrel? At the next corner my husband waited for me. Parked slantwise in a paved lot. Boarded-up Texaco station. Cracked concrete, thistles grown four or five feet tall, now sheathed in ice. Through the windshield of the car he watched me patiently. The wipers moved slowly, sluggishly, clearing his face, then hiding it again. Perhaps it was not his face. Perhaps it was a stranger's face.

So cold!

I walked until my legs ached, along the river where there were entire trees encased in ice. The marrow of my bones froze in sympathy. Such defiant, brittle beauty, those glass trees!—I took hold of a small branch, meaning only to examine it, and it snapped off in my hand.

Nobody will die, I whispered.

The alcohol wore off. He said he would make me regret it: accused me of loving the wrong man. If you love one you betray the others. They watch you closely. My breast ached, where he had accidentally leaned on me, hard, not knowing how sharp his elbow was or how heavy he was even in his boyish love.

The inside of my mouth was raw. I tasted blood.

Weeks later my husband and my lover meet. By accident of course. They are not meant to meet, they do not know each other, yet it seems they recognize each other—how is it possible? One wears a quite ordinary windbreaker, the other an attractive camel's-hair coat, rather rumpled behind; both are in a hurry. It is nearly six on a Friday evening and they are on their way into the liquor store at the new mall, nearly colliding in the doorway. One nervously allows the other to enter first. Sorry. Excuse me. Go ahead, one says.

Waiting back in his station wagon are two of my lover's children, both boys. My husband is alone. The two men glance at each other, then away, and then—browsing at opposite ends of the store—each seeks the other out in a long mirror that runs the full length of the store, where the wall and ceiling meet. Of the two of them, only my husband has been questioned by the police; my lover, whose name is unknown, who is not even a "friend" of the missing woman, has been waiting for a telephone call for many days. His complexion has gone pasty, his bowels have gone sour, his hands shake, a smile twitches about his lips, he stares at the man in the camel's-hair coat whom he doesn't know, he has no reason for knowing, and the man in the camel's-hair coat stares back at him, partly hidden behind an enormous display of local wines. Of course there are other customers. The store closes at six and everyone is in a hurry. There is even music, a familiar love song of many decades past.

My lover, a pale sick-looking man in a soiled windbreaker, leaves the store without buying anything; my husband, staring after him, stands so long without moving that one of the sales clerks approaches him, curiously, and asks if he needs assistance.

He looks around. He blinks. His eyes are red-rimmed, his nostrils pink and raw-looking, he has not shaved, evidently, for two or three days.

What did you say, he asks, what did you mean by that? □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Story by Margaret Goggin

CHIAROSCURO

On the days Yvonne was in school she sat behind Libby at one end of the double semicircle of desks, but she was out so much of the time I couldn't get a fix on her. She failed the first marking period and then the second because of absences and never doing any work when she was there. Hair on end, eyes bulging, staring at nothing, brooding, sullen, she would spring to life without warning, jittering in her seat, waving both arms to be recognized and then lapsing into giggles as soon as everyone's attention turned to her. Sometimes I saw her in the lavatory, gazing and muttering angrily at herself in the mirror or just hanging around, self-absorbed and alone.

By April when she'd been absent a four-week stretch, I gave her up. Failed three marking periods, she couldn't possibly pass English or, according to the records, anything else. She wasn't officially dropped, though, and there was something about her no one would tell me. Her guidance counselor almost slipped once, but caught himself. Drugs and/or pregnant, I supposed. The usual. She haunted me sometimes, but, with a hundred-forty other kids and a mountain of paper work always pressing, not often. Once I tried to call, but there was no phone.

I asked Libby one day why Yvonne was out so long, but she was guarded and non-commital.

"She sick, I guess."

Clearly, she didn't want to talk about it.

Then one summery Tuesday in early May, Yvonne showed up.

All the doors and windows in the classroom were wide open to any stir of air passing through. It was one of those sudden hot sticky days we'd all rather be elsewhere—outside, at the beach, anywhere.

We're five minutes into class, sweating literally over a simple vocabulary exercise, filling in blanks on dittoed sentences with words from a new list I gave out yesterday. While we work, Wayne treats us to one of the strikingly relevant stories he uses to fill vacuums of silence. Too much quiet makes Wayne nervous.

"Jeez, last night on TV this dude says to another guy, 'I ain't gonna let you malign my character no more,' and he shoots him. POW! Hey, I says, we got that word on the list this week. Malign. Means tell bad lies about somebody. 'I ain't gonna let you malign my character no more.' POW!"

Patty and Rita exchange smiles, lifting heavy ropes of hair off slim necks, glancing to me to share their amusement at Wayne's performance. Every day he impresses on us how English II is enriching his life. If he gets a thirty on the Friday vocabulary test, he'll shrug it off.

"Well, there's six more words I didn't know before."

Only a hardened cynic could flunk a kid so bent on rapport and he knows I'm a pushover.

"What show was that, Duke?" Tommy wipes sweaty palms down his jeans. Tommy likes to lead Wayne on, see how far he can bait him into a trap and then pounce. Not maliciously, just for fun, to show he isn't taken in by the brown-nosing.

Wayne is wary by now, having been caught a few times.

"Some old western. Buncha guys sittin' around playin' poker in a saloon. I forget the name."

"What time last night?"

"Late. Eleven, twelve. Past your bedtime."

Frieda, on the girls' side of the room, pulls the front of her blouse away from her flat chest to shake some air down inside.

"Listen, you guys," she says, not bothering to look up from writing, "I'm trying to concentrate."

She has little patience with this loose chatter, but she's better than she used to be.

"You're too easy on them, Miss MacIntyre," she complained early in the year. "You ought to send those boys to the office for talking like that."

Homely little thing she was, long stringy hair stuck behind big ears, drawstring mouth puckered tight in her pinched little face.

"What would they learn there?"

"They'd learn not to talk in class!"

Not in this school, I didn't say. In this school the office is like a seat on the fifty-yard line. "GO TO THE OFFICE!" is music to the ears of all the outcast clowns who'd rather spend fifty minutes on the bench there than in a classroom anytime. In the office they crack jokes with the secretaries, run errands

---

MARGARET GOGGIN describes herself as "uprooted a lot" between being born in Connecticut and presently living there. This is her first published story after a career as teacher (high school), mother (a son, a daughter), and wife (of an NYU professor).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all over school, trip up teachers who stumble through their outstretched legs to mailboxes and ridicule those who struggle with the clattering monster duplicator that is always out of fluid, out of paper, out of sync.

"Hey, Miss MacIntyre, you're stripping the gears!"

In the office there's drama sometimes when a guidance counselor creams some smartass kid who thinks he's number ten in class rank instead of twenty-seven or bitches his grades didn't get sent to his college yet. It's like TV, especially when the mothers come in and yell. The office is not where anyone learns not to talk in class.

What I did say was, "I doubt it, Frieda, but thanks for your concern. I need to know how you kids feel about these things. Look, at least these boys are pleasant, they're not mean, and some of the things they say are interesting. We don't want a jail in here, do we? You're free to express you opinion. If they're distracting you, tell them. As long as things don't get out of hand, I'd like us to be relaxed and comfortable with each other, not uptight and hostile."

Poor Frieda was terribly disappointed with me then, hyped as she was on discipline and achievement. She still fights for an A on every assignment, but she's learned, after all these months, to relate in more effective ways than complaining and giving orders, and the other kids, finally, have stopped resenting her and learned to respect her standards.

"Sorry about that, Frieda," Wayne whispers, getting back to work, relieved to be off the hook with Tommy now that he's made his brownie point for the day.

Attendance taken, I unstick the seat of my dress from the plastic cushion of my chair and roam the room for a little personal contact.

Frank's hand is swollen and purple with a gash across the knuckles. Two days ago he swung at a car door someone locked against him. Gentle, good-humored, curly-headed Frank has a vein of violence that explodes now and then, not at people, but at inanimate objects—invariably large, inflexible objects, with the result that his right hand is often out of commission and he's become ambidextrous; that is, he can arm wrestle and write equally illegibly with either hand.

"How's the hand, Frank?" I speak softly so as not to disturb Frieda.

"Not that bad, " he grins, disparaging the damage.

"Is it very painful?"

"Not that bad."

"Did you see a doctor?"

"Yeh, it ain't broken or nothin'."

With the back of his good hand he wipes beads of sweat from his brow and under a fringe of dark lashes any girl would envy flashes me a pleading look. He's glad I'm interested, but don't give him a heavy lecture.

Connie's desk is piled high with books, notebooks, purse, lunch, gym clothes, paper bag of needlework, box of chocolate bars she's selling for the Spanish Club. Her locker was ripped off in September so she carries everything with her. Under a canopy of tight dark curls she works on a cramped leftover corner of desk about six inches square.

"Do you like this book, Connie?"

"Oh, I love it, Miss MacIntyre." Her face is radiant with heat, with pleasure, with beauty. "It's the best book I ever read."

"How far along are you?"

Besides Frieda, Connie is the only one in this class who reads for extra credit. Her family speaks Spanish and the standard tests show she reads English at fifth grade level.

"Up to the fire in Mr. Rochester's room. Miss MacIntyre, is someone in the attic?"

"It looks that way, doesn't it?"

Frieda has finished the exercise and listens. Her hair, recently cropped in a boyish cap, falls softly on her forehead and covers her ears. In repose her face is soft and sweet. She reaches for the book and copies the title in her notebook. I leave them with heads together in whispered discussion and kneel down next to Libby's desk.

"Libby, when do you want to take the make-up test on the last story?"

"Well. . .let's see. . . . Which story was that now?"

" 'Flight,' the one by John Steinbeck."

"That the one about the boy knifed somebody?"

"That's it."

Her soft voice lifts to a high note on certain words, accenting by pitch. She has the face of an African carving, rich mahogany, wide cheekbones, generous mouth, one broken tooth in front she takes pains to hide. She jabs at her vocabulary exercise paper with the point of her pencil, twisting in her seat and scowling.

"That story gross, Miz MacIntyre. I ditten like the way it end. Who was them men?"

"Who do you think?"

"Some kind of police maybe? Or friends the guy he knifed? I don' know."

"Why don't you come in after school tomorrow? We'll talk about it before you take the quiz. It's going to be an essay anyway so you can give your own opinion. How's that?"

She suppresses a smile. "You gonna ax me the same question you ax the rest?"

"No, I'll make up a special one for you."

Forgetting her broken tooth, she laughs, eyes dancing. "I was afraid of that," she says. Then her hand goes to her mouth as she remembers.

"Tomorrow at 2:30?"

Big sigh of resignation. "Okay."

She'll be there. She's read most of the stories in the new book already. In the first essay of the year, the one where they tell me their interests and goals, Libby confided she didn't want to end up housecleaning like her mother. She's got ambitions to work in an office.

On the other side of the room, Wayne and Frank are comparing answers. A few others have pushed aside their papers. I pick up a copy of the sentences from my desk and pull a chair to the center of the semicircle of desks.

"Okay, let's see what we've got."

"Wait, wait! I'm not finished!"

"Number one, lemme do number one, Miss MacIntyre."

From the corner of my eye I see a figure wander into the doorway. Yvonne slouches across the front of the room behind my desk, drops the blue tardy slip and collapses into the seat behind Libby. The blue slip means the office knows she's late and I'm to admit her without a hassle.

"Hello, Yvonne," I say.

She looks dreadful. Muddy skin, hollow cheeks, bloodshot eyes, wild hair gray across the front like shredded steel wool. She really is sick, I think. She stares at her desk, ignoring my

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

greeting.

I find a vocabulary list and sheet of sentences for Libby to pass back.

"That's a new word list, Yvonne. You can fill in the meanings and sentences as we check this exercise."

She looks blankly at the papers as if they have nothing to do with her.

"Do you have a pencil?" I ask.

And Libby dives into her purse and finds a pencil. Yvonne ignores it. Libby places it in the slot on Yvonne's desk.

We correct the exercise, reading the sentences, discussing several meanings each word can have, noting the spelling. When we finish, there are twenty minutes left in the period. I assign reading from the short story books, free choice this time, explaining we'll form groups tomorrow to prepare scenes from their stories to act out in class next week. As I expect, they jump the gun, scraping chairs to group up with their buddies now and argue over which story to do.

It's okay. That leaves me twenty minutes, barring interruptions, for Yvonne. What can I do for this desolate child in twenty minutes?

After a hesitant glance over her shoulder, half-offering to stay if Yvonne wants her, Libby goes to join the group from which Frieda beckons her.

I draw a chair close to Yvonne's desk.

"How are you feeling, Yvonne?"

She stares at me as if she has been to hell and back and could tell me horrors I wouldn't believe. I listen, but she says nothing. The pencil and paper lie untouched on her desk.

"Yvonne, I'd like to help you make up some of your work."

It's useless. We both know it. Why, I wonder, has she come back at all? Why is the office readmitting her now? Why not wait and start again in the fall? I know why, of course. Legally, we can't refuse her.

She turns away and scans the tumult of the class. I wait. Finally her attention strays back to me.

"What that book they got? I can't do no work without a book."

"I'll sign one out to you. Why don't you start on that vocabulary while I get it?"

I give her Libby's exercise paper to copy and cross to the closet for a book. I close the door to keep the racket from the corridor although it means cutting off the faint cross breeze that makes the room bearable. A quick look around, eavesdropping, clues me in. Five groups have formed. They're choosing stories they can cast by flipping pages to find the names of characters. It's a beginning.

On my way back to Yvonne, I stop at my desk for her book card. She already has three books which school rules require be returned or paid for before I can give her another. I weigh the chances of getting them back and decide this is no time to niggle over details. She can't do no work without a book.

I place the crisp new paperback of short stories with its inviting pastel illustrated cover on her desk with her book card. She still hasn't picked up the pencil. I write her name on the slip inside the book and the name of the book and its number on her card, pointing out that she already has three books to return because we won't be using them again and they're needed for other classes. She looks at me as though I'm speaking to her in a foreign language. Never mind. I'll get the janitor to open her locker and retrieve the books myself if anyone makes an issue. Or pay for them myself.

"Yvonne," I say, pausing to let her attention focus on what I'm about to say. Her eyes come slowly around to my face. I've opened the book to the story we've just finished, the one by Steinbeck, and placed it in front of her. "If you'll read this story tonight and come in after school tomorrow with Libby, we'll talk about it and you can take a make-up test with her then."

She turns pages to see how long the story is.

"Tomorrow in class you can join one of these groups to get started on a scene to act out next week."

I pick up the vocabulary list and exercise. "Study these words for a test on Friday. We'll have an exercise on them every day until then."

The words echo vacantly in my ears as they must echo in hers. I go down the list explaining simple definitions, printing them as I go. To be doing something, anything.

I see how it is with her. It's too much. She's tuned out already on this garbage, gazing at the other kids chattering in their friendly groups while she sits here isolated with God knows what miseries milling through her woolly head. Her face is masked and remote.

The noise, the heat, the hopelessness of going through the motions depress me. Under my light dress damp clammy nylon slip, pantyhose, bra, pants stick to my wet skin. Trickles of sweat run down under each arm. I'm dizzy with hunger and heat and impatience and anger at this impossible situation. What can I do for this child? She wants nothing of me.

When I've finished the definitions, I tell her to copy Libby's exercise, putting the words in sentences. Then I take her book card back to my desk and place it with the others for this class in a rubber band in the top drawer. A place for everything and everything in its place. My evaluation reports always mention the neatness of my room, my records, my person. And my dedication. I work hard at this job. Yvonne frightens me. She threatens the comfortable ease and commitment I've established here. I see no sensible reason for her to be here, threatening me and what I've managed to accomplish while she's been away. What am I to do with her?

When I look up, Connie is slipping a candy bar from her Spanish Club box to Loretta, who is handing her two quarters. They catch me watching and look guilty. Candy bars are not supposed to be sold during class time.

Loretta objects. "I'm starving, Miss MacIntyre. I didn't eat no breakfast."

"Didn't eat *any* breakfast," I say automatically.

She smiles. "Any breakfast. Anyway the bell's gonna ring any minute and we got gym next period. I'll faint out there if I don't eat something."

"Okay, but keep it out of sight and put the papers in the trash can."

Eating in classrooms is forbidden because the papers and garbage make more work for the janitors. But these kids have come a long way since September when they stampeded in here wild and fractious from junior high. They've adjusted to most of the petty rules and rituals. They need a break once in a while. Some of them get picked up by bus at six-thirty. By ten o'clock they're famished and for some it's still two hours to lunch. Snacks used to be served in the cafeteria during a morning break, but the confusion confounded the cafeteria ladies who couldn't get their tables cleared in time for lunch. The apple

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

machine was taken out when apple cores began clogging toilets and littering stairs.

Five minutes are left to check the story groups for progress. Then I see Yvonne has sauntered to Connie's desk and taken a chocolate bar.

Connie squeals. "That's fifty cents, Yvonne!"

Yvonne turns away. Connie erupts from her chair, spilling books, lunch, gym clothes, needlework, notebooks, candy bars, purse to the floor. Yvonne whips around to face her. Connie hesitates.

The room is suddenly silent, everyone acutely attentive, arrested in tableau, waiting. Then Wayne, nervous at the quiet, comments offhand to no one in particular what's obvious to us all.

"She's crazy," he says.

Yvonne drops the candy bar on her desk, strides across the middle of the room and slaps Wayne hard across the face. She's fast and he's too fat to move quickly. She gives him three or four hard blows before he can get out of his seat, holding his arms up to protect his face. He doesn't hit back. She's taken him by surprise, she's a girl, she's black. He's not sure what to do.

I move between them more as a matter of form than substance. Yvonne is taller than I am and at least ten pounds heavier. Wayne could heave me out the window if he chose. Yvonne's eyes glare from her grotesque face. She raises her hand at me as Wayne judiciously retreats behind my back. An intake of breath hisses around the room.

"Go to your desk, Yvonne," I say evenly, without threat, without tremor.

She swoops around me toward Wayne. He circles the room away from her, his pudgy face bewildered, searching for openings he can fit through. She follows him. I follow her. The class sits mesmerized.

"Yvonne," I say, less calmly, "leave Wayne alone. Go back to your seat."

She ignores me as if I don't exist and we continue to circle. No one laughs although we must look comical: scared fat boy, enraged girl, anxious teacher playing tag in dead earnest. I get close enough to catch her arm. She wrenches away and crashes over an empty desk at my feet. The sound of wood and metal on the tile floor cracks the silence like a shot.

"Don't you touch me, don't mess with me, or I'll take care of you," she spits at me. "I already taken care of one teacher today."

From a desk she picks up a book and raises it as if to throw. If she hits me with the book, she's sure to be expelled. She's failing, probably on drugs, maybe on the street. There's no way I can help her. Maybe someone can, but I can't. Let her hit me and good riddance.

I right the overturned desk and move toward her, holding my hand out for the book. She jerks it back, still as if to throw.

"Don't, Yvonne. You'll be in serious trouble if you do."

Still she clutches the book, not throwing it, waiting perhaps for a last desperate moment when she's cornered, daring me to pursue her. The clock shows three minutes to bell time. It's late, but the office should know what's going on before Yvonne takes care of too many teachers. When the bell rings, she'll escape to her next encounter which may be more serious than this one.

I cross to the intercom, press down the switch and wait. Wayne perches on a seat near the door, breathing heavily, his face red and glistening with sweat, poised for a quick exit. Frank raises and lowers his good hand, clenching and unclenching his fist over the scarred surface of his desk, watching me as if for a signal.

In an undertone Tommy asks, "You want me to get Mr. Bradshaw?"

Bill Bradshaw, who teaches next door to me, is smaller than I am, a wee slip of a man. His thick glasses, slender hips, hair parted in the middle, his prissy enunciation pitted against Yvonne? She could take care of both of us with one blow.

"No, thanks," I say, grimly, but when Tommy glances up and our eyes meet, we both look away to avoid smiling.

Connie has collected her chocolate bar and huddles over her clutter ready to run on signal. Patty and Rita watch each other, already, I suspect, elaborating the details of this episode for retelling. Frieda's eyes are fixed on me, wide and worried. Libby sits next to her with downcast lids, frowning and uncomfortable.

I press the intercom lever again. There is a click and the nasal voice of the operator comes through the loudspeaker. Two minutes to the bell.

"Yes?"

"This is Miss MacIntyre in 178. Please send Mr. Wade to my room."

I speak in a level modulated tone, standard procedure for a classroom emergency, set out in the teachers' manual each September. I've never used the procedure before. In theory it's supposed to bring Tom Wade running. With clear halls he can reach my room in about one minute, in time.

"Who is this?"

"Miss MacIntyre in 178."

"What's the trouble?"

"Please send Mr. Wade to my room right away!"

There is a click and then a long silence. Yvonne has her eyes on the clock. She seems to have forgotten Wayne.

"I'm sorry. Mr. Wade is out of the office at the moment."

Yvonne lowers the book and a smile licks at the corners of her mouth.

Measuring the words slowly, I address the perforated box on the wall.

"Call the teachers' lounge and tell him to go to 178 immediately!"

She gets the message. All over the school loudspeakers blast, "MR. WADE! GO TO 178 IMMEDIATELY! MR. WADE! GO TO 178 IMMEDIATELY!" just as the passing bell rings.

Wayne bolts through the door, the classroom tableau scatters, Connie crouching over her bundles, Rita and Patty swinging their hair back and rolling their eyes at me as they pass. Yvonne drops to the floor the book she's been holding and strolls off, leaving her make-up work. Does this mean she won't be back? I hope so. Outside a crowd blocks the corridor to see what's happening. I wave them away.

The loudspeaker clicks and the nasal voice calls, "Miss MacIntyre?"

"Yes?"

"I've put out a call for Mr. Wade. He should be at your room shortly."

Over the uproar of the hall I shout, "Tell him never mind!"

"MR. WADE! CANCEL THE LAST MESSAGE! MR. WADE! CANCEL THE LAST MESSAGE!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frieda waits until everyone else is gone. She's agitated as I've never seen her, not even in the early days of our year together.

"Miss MacIntyre, you better report her before she really hurts somebody. She near killed Mr. Neal this morning in biology. She threw a bottle at him and broke his glasses. He didn't do a thing. Looks like she came to school ready to get back at the whole world for what happened to her."

"What happened to her, Frieda?"

"You don't know? Miss MacIntyre, where you been? She got gang raped last Halloween."

"Yvonne?"

"Up at Sandhill Ridge. She was wandering around trick and treating by herself."

"How do you know this, Frieda?"

"Everybody knows it, Miss MacIntyre! It was in the paper!"

"Who did it?"

"Well, she couldn't identify anybody. They all had masks on. But she'd been after Libby's brother Roy and his bunch, cockteasing them you know and just looking for trouble and some of their girls bragged they did it. Course the cops don't know that. It's just a rumor."

"It was in the paper?" Vaguely I remembered something, another violent incident in the Sandhill development, about a rape. "That was Yvonne?"

"They didn't give her name because she wasn't but fourteen."

"Is this why she's been out all this time?"

"I guess. She got pregnant and then she went away for a while. She only just got back."

When the bell rings, I write her a late admission slip and she rushes for the door where a few sightseers linger, hoping for diversion.

So that was why Libby was reluctant to tell me.

I lock my door and hurry over to the teachers' lounge for early lunch. As usual, Tom Wade's moon face beams behind a big cigar at one end of a table in the section the men have appropriated for themselves. Carter Neal is with him, a white bandaid pasted against his black cheek along the edge of his neat goatee. One lens of his glasses is cracked.

Tom raises his eyebrows when he sees me and shifts the cigar to one side. I lean across Carter's shoulder for a close look at the damage.

"What happened to you?"

He smiles. "Yvonne Sheldrake took me on."

Deliberately, I set my plate of cottage cheese and Jell-o salad on the table and take the empty seat next to him. The men look up startled at my trespassing.

"What do you know?" I say, looking at Tom. "She just took me on, too."

He detaches the cigar with his thumb and forefinger and grins.

"Where's your scars?" Tom's affable exterior is misleading. We forget sometimes about his ulcers.

"No thanks to you I didn't get any."

The grin vanishes.

"What're you getting at?"

"What're you getting at, letting her back in school this late in the year when there's no chance she'll pass anything? What're you trying to do to her? Make her sit around for the next six weeks feeling foolish so she'll raise hell and drive us all up the wall just when we're too tired and distracted with the end of the year to deal with her?"

He opens his mouth to say something, but I can't stop. All the frustration spills out. "And how come every kid in school knows what happened to her and I couldn't find out, even from her guidance counselor who is supposed to keep us informed of personal problems so that we can do our jobs effectively?"

Two men pick up their trays and move to another table. I don't blame them. I don't like the way I sound either.

Tom relights his cigar, waiting for me to finish. After a moment of silence he says between puffs, "What do you mean she can't pass anything?"

"She's failed everything all year. Why weren't we asked to tutor her?"

"Family never requested a tutor."

"Who requested she come back to school now?"

"Her mother."

"Why?"

"Says the school has to give her an education until she's sixteen."

"How the hell can we. . .?"

"It's the law."

I fork in a mouthful of Jell-o to dampen my throat. How can I be so dripping wet outside and so parched inside? "She's tired of Yvonne mouthing off at home so she's sent her here to mouth off at us."

"We've got no reason to refuse her," Tom says stubbornly.

I look at Carter, who isn't saying a word. He's finished a tuna fish sandwich and an iced tea and is wiping his mouth neatly with his paper napkin as cool as if we're discussing a movie he didn't see.

"She's threatened one teacher, attacked another, and she's bragging about getting away with it."

Tom leans forward on both elbows, studying me.

"You're getting hysterical, Jean. Calm down and tell me what happened."

"She tried to steal a candy bar, beat up on Wayne Hartman, and threatened to hit me with a book."

There is an outburst of laughter around the table and even I, hearing how ridiculous it sounds, have to laugh, too.

"You ready to file a complaint on those charges?"

"Listen, Tom, I worked hard to get that fourth period class organized. She prances in late today, rejects all help and scares those kids and me half to death. I think she's nuts! How about you, Carter? You'll file a complaint with me?"

He gives me a dazzling smile. Carter's in a difficult position, our token black male, gentlest man on earth, wouldn't hurt a fly.

"What happened in your class?" I ask him.

"She came in late, asked to go to the girls' room. I gave her a five-minute pass. Twenty minutes later Alice French brought her back. She was in the middle of a fight down there. When I told her to sit down, she winged me with a beaker."

"How about it, Tom? Grounds enough to refuse her?"

"Look, when I talked to her mother yesterday afternoon, she said she thinks Yvonne is being provoked by the boys who attacked her last fall and their girl friends. She sent her down south to relatives for a while, but they couldn't keep her."

"I don't wonder. My God, what are we going to do with her? The poor kid's like a wild animal."

"You're feeling sorry for her now?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course, don't you? What about psychiatric counseling?"

"Father says they can't afford it."

"There's funds for this."

"They don't take charity, he says."

"So what do we do? The kid needs help."

"You know," Carter says quietly, "until sixth grade she was a straight A student, no discipline problems, just a bright happy little girl. All the teachers praised her. Four years ago she started downhill."

"You think it's too late, Carter?" I wish I could eat the cottage cheese. I've got two more classes this afternoon. But the Jell-o slides down easier.

Tom picks up the phone on the first ring. He always sits where he can reach it without moving. As he hangs up, he pushes back his chair.

"Fight in the girls' locker room," he says. "You know a Frieda Brower, Brewer, something like that?"

"Frieda Bruen. She's one of mine."

"Yvonne just cut her. Come on."

At the gym door I notice Carter is carrying my salad plate.

"You got to eat," he says.

Frieda's on a couch in a cubby off the nurse's office, holding a huge wad of bandage to one cheek. Mrs. Cronin bustles out when I appear.

"You want to stay with her a minute, Miss MacIntyre, while I make out some forms and call the hospital?"

I sit on a stool next to the couch with my plate in my lap.

"You were eating your lunch?" Frieda asks, looking over what I eat.

I pick out a grape from the Jell-o and offer it to her on the tip of my fork. She sucks it with a deep sigh.

"Man, I was dry. That feels good."

Then she moans and flaps her hands in the air and tears spill out from under her closed eyelids. The bandage slips down and I can see the cut, from just under her eye almost to her mouth, blood still seeping. I can't tell in the mess how deep, but it must be through somewhere and the juice from the Jell-o stings. I put the bandage back and wipe her tears with a tissue from my purse.

"Can you tell me what happened?"

She swallows hard and sucks in a gulp of air, clenching her teeth on it for control. I put my hand over hers and she grabs on to it and holds tight.

"We were getting dressed for gym, see, me and Yvonne, next to each other. I got near her on purpose to tell her she shouldn't of done that to you because you never did nothing but be nice to her. She said she was sorry. I think she really was, Miss MacIntyre. She said, 'I ought to get my head examined.' She said it kind of to herself, but some black girl heard it and hollered it out loud, laughing so everybody could hear and then some other black kids started yelling at Yvonne she was crazy and she started after the first girl and they all ganged up and pushed her up against the lockers."

"All black girls?"

"Man, the white kids were rushing to get out of there."

"She had a knife?"

"All of a sudden she pulls this knife out of her pocket, a little bitty knife, like a toy, and flips it open and everybody jumps back."

"And how did you. . .?"

"I really didn't think it'd cut anything, Miss MacIntyre, but I told her, 'Yvonne, some teacher comes in here you'll get in trouble even if it won't cut.' I started to walk toward her like you did, really cool and slow, looking her right in the face and held out my hand. And she said, 'It will too cut. I'll show you.' And she did."

"Frieda," I start to say, thinking, My God, what have I done to this child?

"Will I have a bad scar, do you think?"

I shake my head and show her my chin which was torn open in an accident a couple of years ago, but you can hardly see the scar.

"Will it hurt when they stitch it up?"

"Just a tiny pin prick for the anesthetic and then nothing."

When Mrs. Cronin is ready to drive her to the emergency room, I walk them to the door and hug Frieda.

"You're a brave and beautiful girl," I tell her. It's the least I can do. I hope they can fix the scar not to show too much.

In the gym office Tom Wade and Carter Neal and one of the woman gym teachers guard Yvonne. She sits withdrawn, expressionless, alone. I wish I could help her.

Tom comes out with the knife wrapped in a handkerchief. It looks like a toy, about two inches long, folded in a red enamel case.

"Exhibit one," he says. He's working on a new cigar.

"Could I speak to her?" I nod toward Yvonne.

"Better not. She's quieted down now. Took three gym teachers. You might get her stirred up again."

He's probably right.

"I'd like her to know I'm sorry."

"Aren't we all?"

"What will happen to her?"

"Cops will pick her up in a few minutes. She won't be in your class anymore."

That's not what I meant.

"I wish I could do something for her."

"Nothing you can do. Fill out that complaint form and get it to me before you leave today."

My lunch period is almost over. I force down what's left of the cottage cheese and Jell-o, rinse the plate and ask the student on duty in the nurse's office if she'll take it back to the cafeteria when she goes over to the next lunch period.

I hurry to unlock my room before the bell rings. Teachers are supposed to be at their doors when classes change to keep traffic flowing smoothly along the corridors. In seven minutes my next class will noisily occupy the semi-circle of desks. In the meantime there's Yvonne's desk to clear, her book card to set aside as a reminder to check her locker, the wording of the report on her to consider, the record player to set up, two homework assignments to write on the board.

There's no time now to think about what's happened to Yvonne and Frieda and what, if anything, I might have done to avoid it. There are still two classes to teach, exercises for the rest of the week to run off on the ancient ditto machine, the report to write and deliver to Tom, a set of compositions to read, comment on and grade, the monthly faculty meeting after school.

Later, when I'm alone, I'll try to sort it out, to persuade myself that I'm not to blame, that I couldn't have done differently. Later, tonight and other nights, again and again and again. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Story by Carol Adorjan

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Fucking bitch!" My daughter—expressing herself. She flings it out—not to me (never to me)—about me, at me, as though I am a wall sprung up in her path.

It is three o'clock. Since midnight we have paced the floor looking out windows at the silent white street, shivering for her and for ourselves. I wonder what I have done to make her so defiant. I try to go back to the beginning in search of an answer, but my mind sticks on the day not yet over and I cannot get beyond.

At breakfast, I ask my daughter to accompany me to the nursing home to see her grandmother.

"Old people make me sick," she says.

"You'll be old yourself someday," I say.

"That's the reason," she says.

Her answer makes me uncomfortable and angry. "Your grandmother loves you," I say. "The least you could do—"

Without looking at me, she gets up from the table, scrapes her uneaten egg into the dog's dish and goes to her room, giving me the finger as she mounts the back stairs.

At the nursing home I am stopped at the reception desk by a sour, square lady in a green smock. "Your mother has gotten it into her head that her teeth aren't her teeth," she tells me. "That we've taken them—switched them. We've assured her we wouldn't do such a thing, but you know how they are. She made an awful fuss about it. Wouldn't eat, clacked them at the nurses—that sort of thing. Last night we found her with a pile of teeth—six sets!—on her bed, trying them on one after another."

I laugh.

CAROL ADORJAN is a former high school teacher living in Winnetka, Illinois. Her stories have appeared in Redbook *and* Four Quarters, *she has published three children's books, and her radio plays have been aired on Chicago's WFMT.*

The woman clears her throat and goes on. "You can't imagine the confusion it's caused."

"Oh, yes. I can."

"We'd like you to talk to her about it. We try to provide a calm atmosphere here. That kind of behavior is disturbing to the other residents."

With effort I put on the proper look of concern and agree to talk to my mother about her misconduct. Perhaps it will be easier for me to be mother to my mother than it is to be mother to my daughter.

Knots of old people come apart to stare at me as I move down the cool green corridor. They nod and murmur as I pass. A man, his eyes magnified by thick rimless glasses, grins up at me from his wheel chair. "My daughter," he says to those nearby. "I knew she'd come." One frail lady shuffles into my path on blue-veined bird legs. She takes hold of the sleeve of my jersey dress. "Such a pretty dress." She lays her head against my chest and leans there, smelling like a sour sponge. "Nice feel against the skin." She looks at me, a wicked glint in her eye, adds, "Like it's been sinned in," and drifts back against the wall.

My mother's door is partly closed. I push it open slowly and go in. I stand at the metal foot of the mechanical bed. A set of teeth grins at me from a glass on the bedside table. My mother looks through me, eyes fixed, white hair, white face, shrunken white-gowned shoulders emerging from the mounds of sheet and pillow like an unfinished sculpture. I can't imagine this frail stranger sneaking around in the middle of the night stealing teeth.

"Mother," I say. "It's me, Libby."

Not a flicker to let me know she has heard.

I move around the side of the bed. "It's Libby, Mother. I've come to see you."

Her eyes follow me warily. "Libby's at school."

"No, Mother. I'm here."

"Yes. Of course. I'm not blind, you know. I see you."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM LOGAN

OBBLIGATO

To your weathered eye, a man stripping naked
Confronts the sea with a fool's dance:
Turning to the waves' half notes,
My penis jiggles like a stalk of kelp.

The sun settles into the horizon,
Into the ruddled light. A cessation.
Somewhere there are banners, history,
The need to inter oneself in the past tense.

Here, I idly attempt to unravel
The weave of the blanket,
Perhaps to bind the sheep up again with thread,
Perhaps to make amends.

In the sand, you await—what?
A kiss. A word unspoken.
Untie your bikini.
Let it float down the coast.

Someone may need it.

Later, the streak of your untanned breasts
And the waning crescent rise,
White slashes against a sky
Riddled with stars.

Hold the word full in the mouth:
Moon. Caught, like us, saying goodbye,
Half mad with new beginnings.
Aleph. Alpha. A.

Silence. "But you're not Libby. I should think I'd know Libby when I see her. I *am* her mother." Silence. "You're too old to be Libby."

She sees me all right. Today, I am too old to be anybody. I go to the window and adjust the blind. Slats of sunlight fall across her.

"Wouldn't you know." She sighs. "Always rains on Good Friday."

It is the middle of January! I want to scream that at her. I want to shake her until she sees me. I sit quietly beside her on the straight-backed, grey metal chair and take her hand—skin stretched thin across the back—into my own. She does not resist. She dozes off, her hand twitching now and then in mine. After awhile I close my eyes and try to bring her back—the mother I remember.

She awakens and mumbles, "It's mine. Tell her to bring it back. I want it."

Has she, too, gone into the past to find herself? If only I could meet her there at some point where we would recognize each other.

"Mother, do you remember the time I accidentally put foot in that wet cement? How frightened I was? So afraid of being discovered I pretended I was sick and stayed home from school for a week?"

She looks at me for a long silent moment. There is sympathy in her eyes and I know she is seeing me now.

"Poor little girl," she says. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I did tell you, Mother."

She smiles and pats my hand. "A regular movie star I've got—her footprint in cement."

I laugh. Movie star, indeed. I remember the time when I wanted to be, when an autographed picture of Esther Williams was enshrined on my bulletin board until I developed severe sinus headaches during diving lessons. After that I threw out the picture and swam little. I would not be photogenic, I knew, with my mouth—over-filled with teeth—open, and plugs on my nose.

My mother lays her head back against the pillow and I say quickly, "Remember the house, Mother?" to keep her here with me. "How I loved that house! It was so different, so unusual."

Her laugh ends as a feeble cough. I pour water from the plastic bottle into a glass and help her sit up. She takes it greedily in noisy gulps and lies back, silent, her lips puckered over her gums like the top of a drawstring bag.

"The house, Mother. We were talking about the house."

"It's a shack," she says, "but the yard's good for the children."

"And the porches, Mother. Remember how we loved to sit out there on summer evenings? We'd drink black cows and pick the cottonwood off the screens."

"Full of termites. Especially the porches. But the rent's cheap. We can make it, I think, if we take in a boarder."

"I loved my room best of all. There was something so cozy about it even with the linoleum on the floor. My desk and my bed and my bulletin board—not even a radio—but I loved it. Especially in winter. It was so nice to come in out of the cold and stand on the register. To feel myself warm from the toes up."

"The winters are the worst. Stoking the furnace in the middle of the night. Those clinkers'll be the death of me. And the drafts! Built like a sieve, this house. If it weren't for the children. . ."

"You're remembering all wrong. You loved that house, Mother. You loved it, too."

But she doesn't hear me. Wait, I think. Don't go away again. Not yet. Something's gone wrong, Mother, and I don't know what to do. I need you to tell me what to do. I lean in to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her. "Mother? Betsy sends her love. You wouldn't recognize her. She's quite the young lady. Sixteen already."

"Sixteen? Yes. Libby's sixteen. I'm so worried about her. She never tells me anything."

"I told you, Mother. Everything. I told you everything."

"How can I help her if she won't tell me what's troubling her? What have I done that she won't talk to me? She's like a stranger. So touchy. Angry all the time. What have I done to make her hate me?"

"I never hated you, Mother. Never. I loved you. You were always so. . .wise, calm. How could I tell you anything? I wanted to tell you. I ached to tell you. In my head I told you. I told you everything. But not out loud. You wouldn't've understood. You thought I was beautiful—could do anything, be anything. And it wasn't like that. It just wasn't like that. My legs were too long and my teeth stuck out and—."

Her eyes wild, she clutches my arm, urging me close. "They've taken my teeth."

"No, Mother. They're here. Your teeth are here." I reach for the glass.

"Those are not my teeth. They don't fit."

I smile. Mine don't fit either, I think. Never have. And they're my own. Have I been blaming her for that all these years? As though she'd done it to spite me?

She looks at me quizzically as if she were trying to place me. "Why do you keep playing tricks on me? You don't even know Libby."

Perhaps she is right. I don't know Libby. Nor her. I don't even know my own mother. It is folly to think we could find each other in the past. We didn't recognize each other then; we can't now.

I get up and go to the window. I feel betrayed—tricked by a past that doesn't exist, by a mother who has weaned herself away from me when I need her most. Worse, I have betrayed myself. My mother is dying and I am powerless to help her. There is nothing I can do but let her go.

After awhile I say, "The sun is so bright today, Mother. Everything's melting. Maybe we'll have an early spring."

She does not respond and I think she is asleep. But when I go to kiss her sunken cheek, her lips move to form silent words. My memory gives them voice: " 'T was ever thus."

Outside her room a man in blue work clothes swirls soapy puddles across the tile floor. Proceeding slowly to keep my balance, I feel as though I am walking in place.

Next stop, the endodontist's. Root canal. The third in less than a year. He shoots me with needles so that I will not feel him stripping away the nerves so that I will feel nothing ever again. I feel violated. Still, when they have finished, the endodontist and the dentist, my mouth will be the most valuable thing about me, all the molars and incisors gold or partly gold. But my smile will not change—bottom teeth crooked, top, protruding—and no one will ever know what I have gone through to save them. Except the mortician. I sit here wondering if I will go into the ground with all this gold or will they toss for it, the mortician and his assistant, filling up the hollow places with cotton before they put me on display.

After dinner, I ransack the closets and storage shelves for the box of pictures my mother carted with her from move to move until this last one. I want to find myself in the past as my mother sees me: beautiful and bright. I want to see us standing together—the two of us, as I have remembered, my mother and me—like sisters. I find nothing. Empty boxes.

At midnight I give up the search and begin to pace the floor, measuring off miles in the worn carpet, waiting for my daughter. I wait for the telephone to ring—the hospital, the police station—and I wonder absently what one wears to the police station at three o'clock in the morning to pick up one's sixteen-year-old daughter—and should I take the rollers out of my hair? I cry. Her father eats.

But she is home now. We don't know where she has been or with whom. We do know she has come home on the back of a stranger's motorcycle, hatless and gloveless. Her face is distorted by the headlong rush into the January cold, her hair is knotted, her eyes glazed.

Her caked lips catch in her braces as she spits out, "Stop trying to live my life! Fuckingbitch!"

Fiery flashes explode in my stomach. My throat tightens. My ears ring. I want to fall on her with the force of bricks. I want to crush her. I want to go back sixteen years and unstart her. She pushes past me and plunges up the stairs. I make no move to stop her.

Her father, eyes blazing, starts after her. "Don't you talk to your mother like that!"

"Asshole!" She slams her door. The house shakes with the force of it.

He starts after her. I cannot let him go. I am afraid he will kill her, afraid he will not. I stop him, my hand over his. I go instead, ascending the stairs slowly, my legs aching. Outside her room, which has changed as she has until it is no longer a part of the house, I take a deep breath. Such is the shock I experience when I cross the threshold, I do not immediately find her among the artifacts.

She lies naked across the mattress on her floor, the week's clothes scattered about the shag carpet. Her body is beautiful, firm and unlined. I step over her gutted tape recorder, switch off her television, and lower myself to the edge of the mattress, my legs, long and veined, stuck up at a sharp awkward angle. She rolls away, her back to me, her knees drawn up. I first saw her this way—ass-end up—when they laid her across my stomach before the umbilical was cut. It is that little body I see now—all roundness and whiteness—and I am awed by its perfection, its vulnerability. It comes to me that she is fighting for her life now even as she did then.

I want to reach out to her, to take her in my arms and tell her of the dreams I have had of the two of us whispering together like sisters. It is unfair. She rips me open and by some sleight of hand I am not quick enough to see, it is she who ends up with the teeth marks.

"We can't go on like this," I say, my voice coming back to me strangely, the words like something from a long-forgotten grade-B movie.

"You won't have to put up with me much longer. As soon as I'm eighteen—"

She has gone into the future to find herself and I am quick to follow. "By then we'll probably look back on all this as if it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never happened. But now—" Now. That's all we have. That's all there is. I stroke her silken hair. She winces as though I have struck her.

"Why don't you kick me out?"

I am silent, considering. It is not the first time she has offered me this role. Each time, I am tempted to accept it. A small part—one line: *If you don't like it here, leave!* But I have read her part, too. I have heard echoes of dialogue she has not yet spoken. It comes to me from the rooms of friends she has yet to meet and from strange street corners, from the offices of future employers and the couches of psychiatrists still in medical school. *My mother threw me out. My own fuckingbitchmother! I was sixteen—vulnerable—bleeding!—and she threw me out like so much unwrapped garbage. What can you expect of me after that?*

Not on your life, Baby. Not on your life. I am worn too thin to play the heavy. When you leave, you will be of age in the eyes of the law (that way I will not have to report your going), and I will bless your way, not curse it. I will help you pack up your empty beer cans and your mud river turtles. I will roll your psychedelic posters, fold your ragged jeans and tie your broken guitar case. I will hand you your bank book (each dollar added slowly, painfully from the day of your birth to insure the college education you do not want), slip your roach clip around your neck, and walk you to the door. *This is your life, Baby,* I will say. *I give it to you today freely as I did the day you were born. I do not now nor have I ever wanted to live it.* After you have gone, your long hair flying behind you as you round the corner, I will shut the door softly but solidly. Then, eventually, I may be able to forgive my mother the things she could not give me, just as I hope you will one day forgive me the things I have given you.

In the meantime, I sit quietly waiting for some words to come to me—from her, from me, from somewhere. None come. I get up and cross to the door.

"What are you afraid of?" she asks, taunting, accusing. She is looking at me now, her lips drawn tight against her braces.

What am I afraid of? That I'll never see the sun on Good Friday. How's that grab you, kid? Or this: I'm afraid it won't even matter. What's more, I'm afraid you'll leave here without having realized that what I feel for you—however imperfect—is love.

I go down the back stairs to the kitchen where my husband asks, "Did you get anywhere?"

I shrug.

When he comes to stand beside me, I notice his pajama fly is open. What a picture we make, I think—the two of us: I, my hair in rollers, he, his fly open, standing together at the foot of the stairs, drooping shoulder to drooping shoulder—the fucking bitch and the asshole. □

JOHN SKOYLES

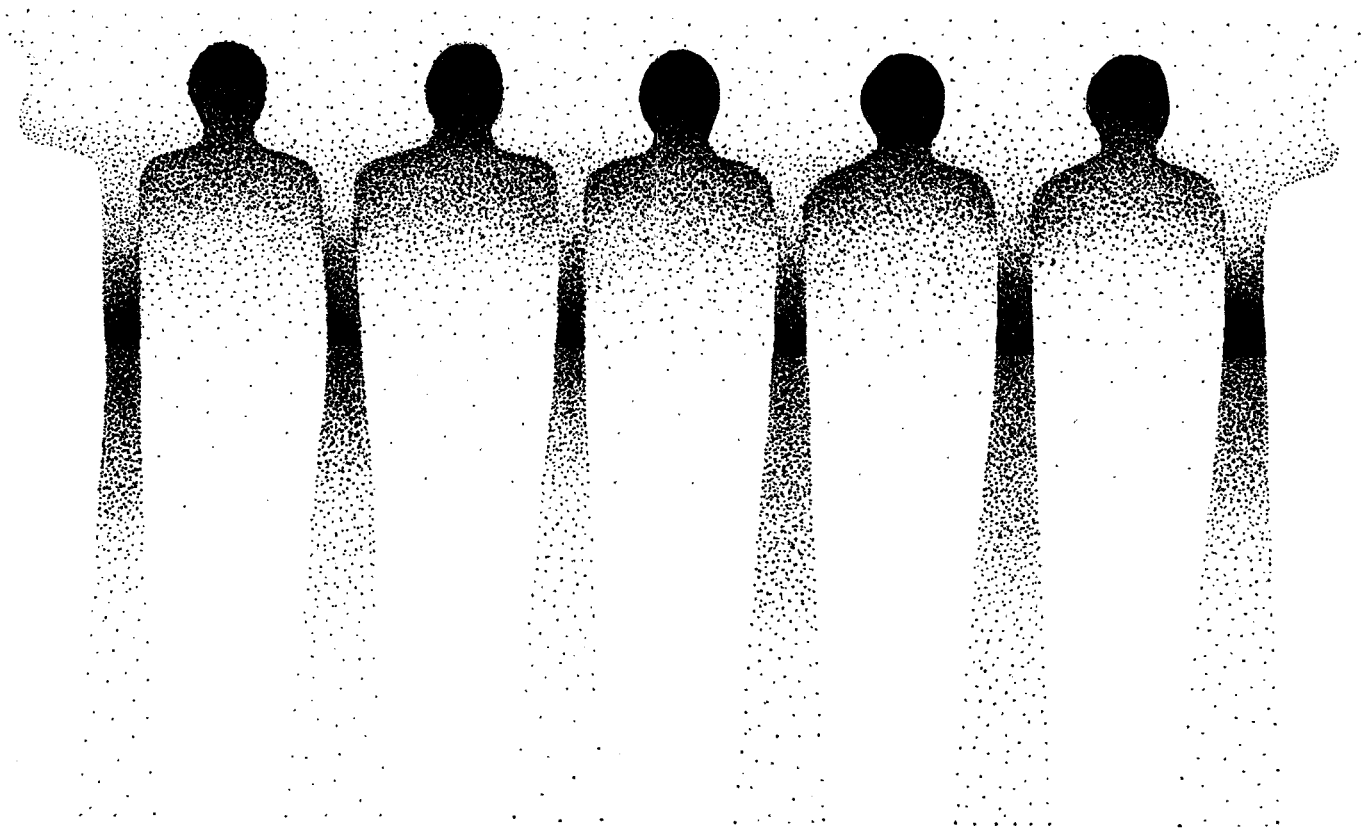
KNOCKOUT

Sometimes two people together
cancel each other out,
and are left dizzy and alone,
as if hesitating outside an office door
where they might not be wanted:
those seconds so conspicuous,
slower than the whole long day;
or like that instant in a slow round
when a good left connects,
and the crowd so silent
before it sinks in
that even the aggressor takes a while
to follow it up, and who knows,
his opponent might want to be alone now,
now that the boredom of vertical life has tasted him,
pulling him down like a lover,
the way God floored St. Teresa
so she woke up not recognizing anyone,
but content she went through
something glorious and came out even.

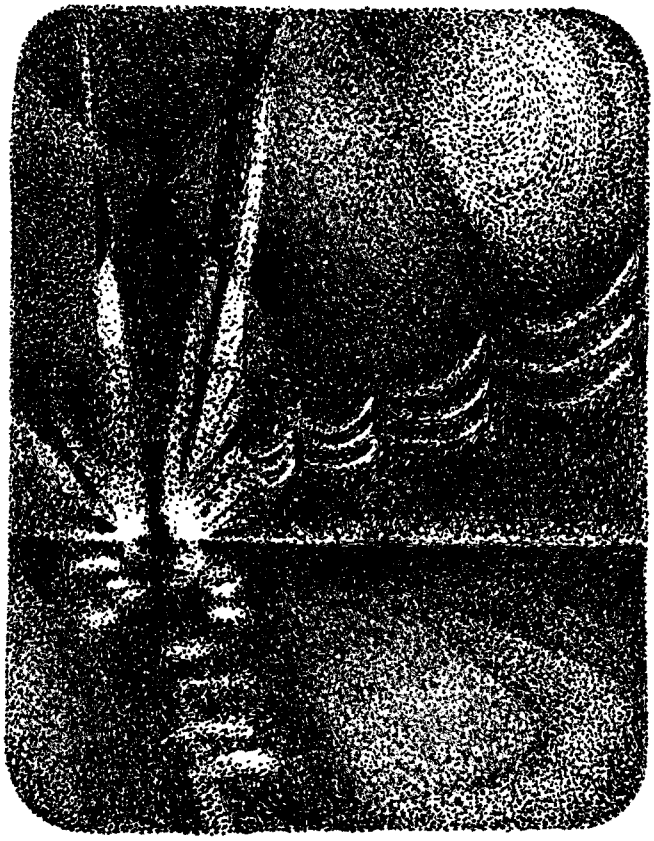
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREDERIC WILL
WILLIAM HATHAWAY
ALBERT SALSICH
THOMAS BRUSH
MARK HALLIDAY
LARRY LANIER
MICHAEL ALLEN
PHILIP PIERSON
STEPHEN DOBYNS
DAN MASTERSON
JIM HALL
JAMES MOORE
JOEFFREY BARTMAN

THE MANLY ART OF POETRY



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



FREDERIC WILL

EPICS OF AMERICA
LXXXIV: HIGHWAY SURFACES

i
Day wraps ninety.
Fathers boil ninety on low green stoves,
Drink it, drive refreshed.

Mothers tackle ninety at the bedroom door,
Blowing fondly across its forehead

The child comes to ninety tailoring it.
He makes it his size.

ii
In the great stained afternoon
ninety travels broadly.

It does the anti-business of a nation.

Skin-deep it shudders,
Humping its shoulder.

Ninety has its moon
In it.

Low gray light just over the surface.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREDERIC WILL

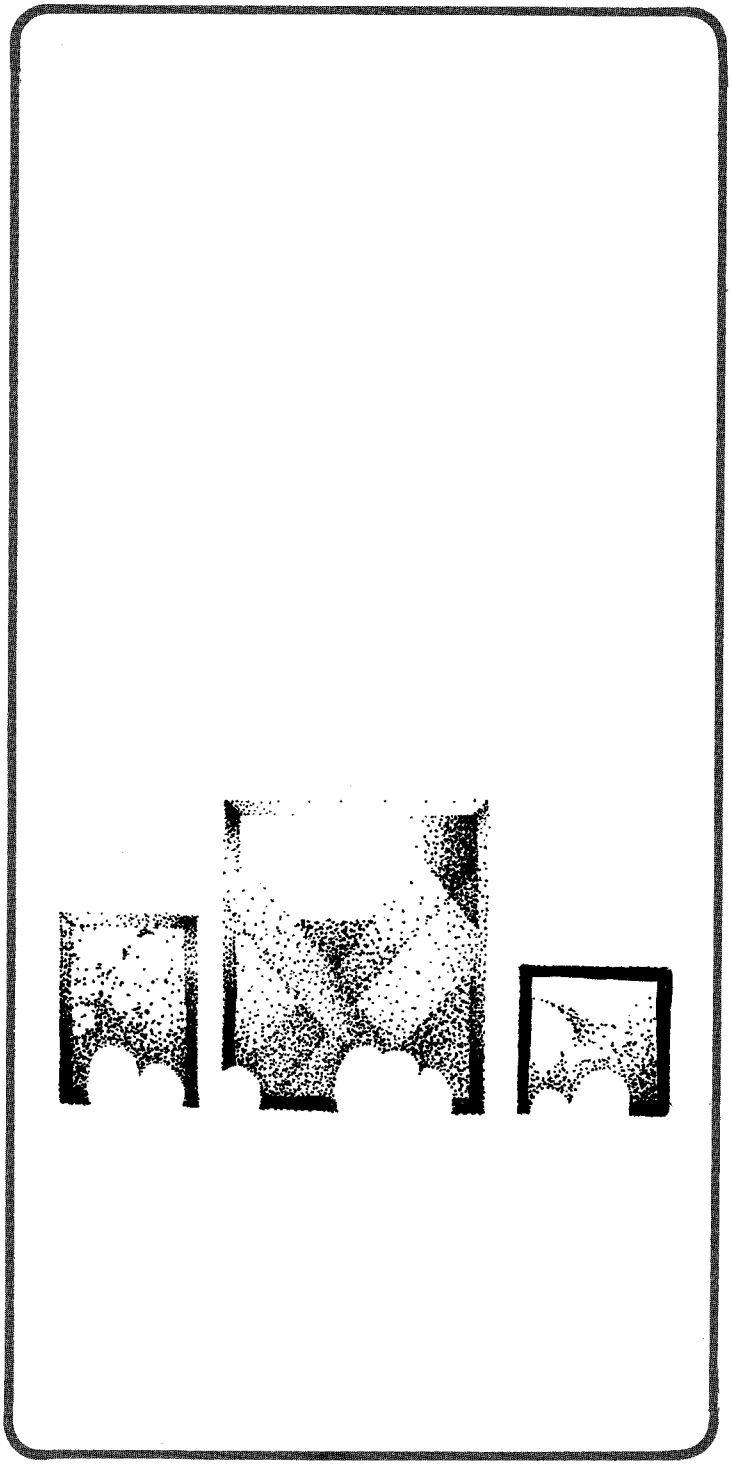
EPICS OF AMERICA
LIII: GALVESTON

Fire reddens the night, dark bolus.
He leaves the stove on, exits into the field.
Oil rigs are clanking fierily toward the sea
pulling away pieces of the god who groans.
He can remember this god inside him, groaning,
Stirring in anger. He pitches himself and opens,
Calling on the terrible god to rise from his body.
It comes out around him, a bolus, a thick
Minnow of power that circles his body.
Time after time the minnow circles, striking him,
Leaving him prone in the corner of the field.
He is left a godless shell, a shaft full of demons,
An unguarded passageway between life and death.
God rises from every acre of coastland.
Minnows of power empty into the face of the rig,
Swim up around his body, up through the field,
To the purple coast. The air grows thicker.
For an hour he has opened the coast to its power.
In some abandoned rig fire smarts and is loose,
Rides up the derricks, spills into the dawn.
It is a signal that the god is exhausted,
A final spurt. The man starts to stir,
Comes back in pieces to himself, stands up.
He rubs his eyes. He notices his house,
A mile from the coast. Why am I here,
He asks himself, in the corner of the field,
A bolus of wounds, an emptiness,
A truck turned over in a vacant lot?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM HATHAWAY

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: ORPHANS ON TRIP DAY



The orphans cut up in line
like other kids. Their keeper
is a college kid, no Fagin
who could make them mind
the value of these *objets d'art*
or teach their little hands
to seize this shiny moment
and return. These strong, loud
boys, girls in barbie dresses
can't be the waifs we yearned to be?
After all, birth *is* a crime! Life
is no museum picnic; our days
are spent weaving sunlight into money.
Even at night our eyes are on the hill,
glittering windows of the rich
so cold and bright, so unlike
the smouldering fever of our hope.

Still wild they throw baloney
at the fountain's mouth. My own
peanut butter days come back,
before my blood turned cunning
with desire and only raced amuck
for fun. Their innocence is too dull.
My heart and hand tense with need
to correct their ways. Not my own,
but truly orphans, I must walk from
them down rows of pictures to the door.
It is not my job to love these well-fed
foster children of the state.
Their way is paid as my keep
is earned in a clean light of industry.
Only once in the first chug
of their chartered bus can I smell
that buried fear, that ancient misery.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALBERT SALSICH

JANUARY'S END

"It's true! . . . I am one month pregnant."

—Letter from a friend
January 31, 1972

I am going back in the mountains now,
above the grey tree line, where deep snow
streams over rocks like marble on the thighs
and breasts of ancient statues, where a wind tries

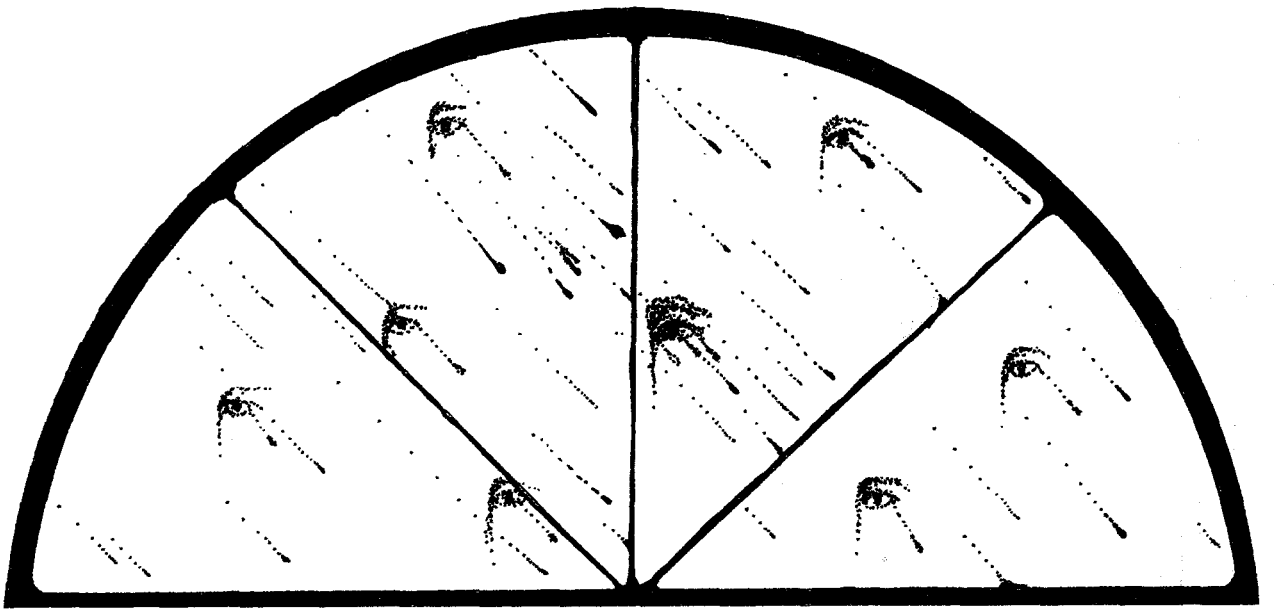
all day to shape the flowing slopes
and cries at night, while the far crest smokes
in a cloud of restless snow, and clouds.
I want to walk where there are no roads,

high on that cold peak, alone.
I want to feel the old fire in my ankle bone,
the one I broke so many years ago, and died
a little. There, in that final place, I will read

your letter loud, and ride the happy words
down every hill, for the hunting birds
and the covered rocks and seeds to hear,
for me to hear again in that thinnest, purest air,

and think of how the mountains seem to grow
each night, and how some lives begin in snow.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THOMAS BRUSH

THE HAPPY POEM

If this is what we've all been
Waiting for, the ghost grinning at us over the warm afternoon,
Or smiling up from the morning
Paper, or something laughing and running
Toward us from the middle of the haunted wood, then how
Can we cope with our children
Painting their faces
Across the raining windows, and why
Do we keep seeing a bridge burst into flames
Beneath us or ourselves bursting
Into tears? And why do we despair of our wives
Who walk by themselves through the dark
Center of night, and why must we fall,
With the good-byes hardly off our lips, on some institution's hideous,
Gray bed? As now, with snow
To our knees we continue
To open doors, looking for laughter and the light
Clothing of joy, forever expecting the happy birds
Coming home to roost.

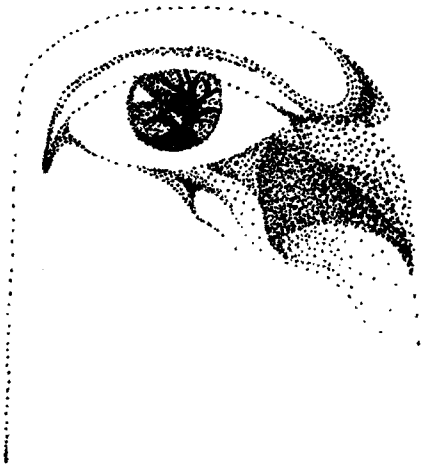
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARK HALLIDAY

CEREMONY ON A SUMMER EVENING

"Must come and bide."

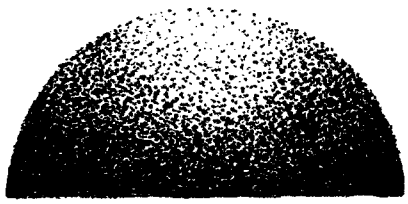
—Hardy



In the darkening green yard we watch
as the iced tea moves among us
and plans are made for the ashes —
they will be sprinkled
beneath the great oak that shades
the center of the yard.
Some of us recall the two people
whose ashes wait, remarkably heavy,
in the two vases. Some of us
have red gullies below our eyes
from days of long sun. We notice
the moon groping through quilts of cloud
and wonder about midnight rain.
The cicadas keep busy around us.

We are busy trying to live with people.
There are layers of time between us,
shades of time dapple the evening.
All mortals, we study this project,
this continuing which we find
too certain, too strong to refuse.
The moon floating, soft, the oak
great and quiet.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LARRY LANIER

DINNER

In our chairs under the county-high
ceiling, the room around us holds
us in, soft and unsaid. Watery,
with what's been brought, made
all loving with paleness, to
please. Waiting for silence,
for my grandfather to gather
about us, limp-leafed,
eternally, the prayer.

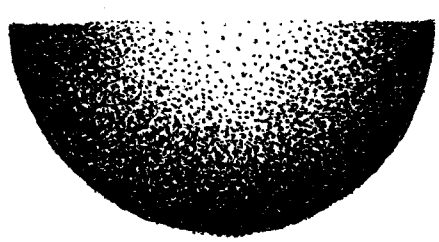
Ritual as anything we ever do, this
meal, heat in the gas stove,
lifts. In a house spread over
with sawed-leaf pecan. In us,
voices always with the past,
nearly clear, come
back to us out of
pain, soulfully.

Overstepping, drawn together the way
only blood can do, to the room
going sixty years back, in
plum-pit youth. Only wandering now,
rounded with spectacles, still
with short-cropped hair
in pictures, the spirit
of my grandmother's
brother, jars.

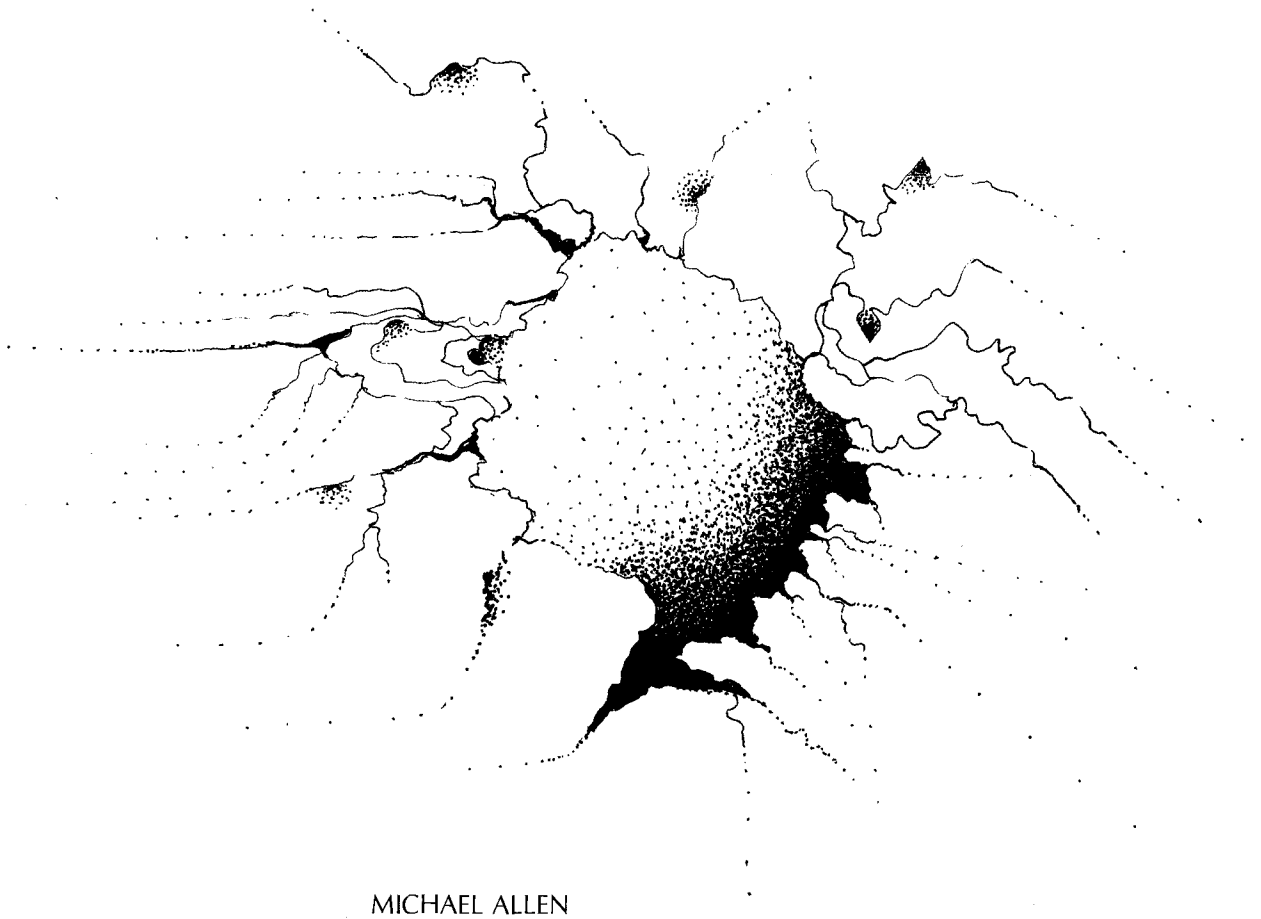
More of what comes from waiting, half-
starved, out of the era of depression,
in a chair under cedar walls, beaded
with resin. Looking up singly at
night, to the light let down with
a cord, in the center of the
room. Wood rats, walling.
Sounds, up from the
house, popping cold
timber.

My grandfather's fringe of hair around the
soft glow of dome, feathery vessels
plume. Like a hand-held flame,
in him, in this house, snuffling.
Books, uncut in pages from the
First World War, silverfish
tread. In barrels, under
the house in cool
summer.

All my slight sight, held along the
table, to the faces of the eaters,
again this year, more feeble, less
intact, losing their strength
in body, up to the life of the
tree-climbers. Who squirm to play
outside, carrying the
photograph in stone,
unmounted, through
life, like cut
teeth.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



MICHAEL ALLEN

LETTING GO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

There's no breath that's without
complaint. I've wanted too much.
I've forced everything open. It's
the heartbeat tightness of night.

This is the inside of the pocket.
The corner's mouth.

Nothing good here—
you should be asleep. You should
trust your body to die, to open,
to sink, pore by pore, through stone
to that rich water where dreams ride colors.

But you refuse. It isn't enough.
The window is greasy with the kind palms
of fat leaves and the beating
of children's hearts makes every dark wall
home.

When birds pour their small creek streams
into your ears, you have given up night
and wait to fight anything.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PHILIP PIERSON

THE SWIMMER

Your father's hands have just heaved you headfirst
over the water. In fact the force
of the toss sends your hair back streaming flat along your face

& your legs wag useless above your head
as if you were trying, mistakenly,
to walk on the dangling cloud which perspective has hung there,

apparently only inches off, to fool you.
In that instant you can smell
the stink of fish, perhaps from your father's reaching hands

or perhaps from the gray slab of water under you.
Your father's cufflink has, in that
instant, caught a facet of direct sunlight, solitary & distinct

as a star. You hang just beyond, lungs banging with air.
Perhaps in another instant water will slam upward
against you, your legs collapse, hands

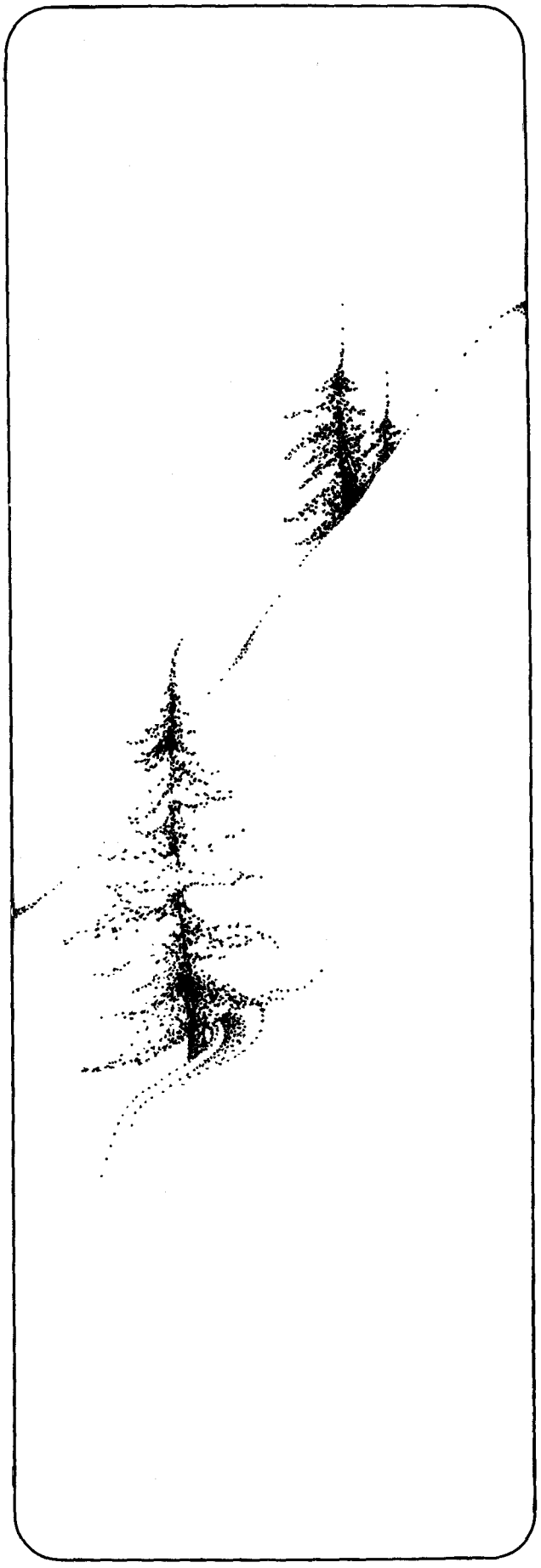
splay outward gripping nothing. Your breath lost then & chest
aching. You will be turning over. Toppling like
a fish yanked in a sudden net toward sunlight.

& overhead, your father's face
distorted—fingers open & still releasing you. As if, in
shoving his hands away, he had made you out of nothing, out of air,

& discovered your heels toppling into the water
before his mouth could come open.
Or not falling, instead weightless by the enormity of your lungs,

instead hanging with your cheeks bulging, redfaced & swollen
with air, white legs sticking by accident
into a cloud. The smell of fish. Water below, rising.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



STEPHEN DOBYNS

LATE AFTERNOON

Against the February sky,
the hills, snow covered, rise
one past the other toward the north.
Pale blue is the color of cold.
From the back porch, I watch
something climb the last hill,
moving right to left, man or beast,
a black spot against the snow.
I imagine it someone recently dead.
The sky is a blue cup. Those I
love are far away. Those I would touch
lead orderly lives in rooms to the south.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAN MASTERSON

GETTING READY FOR SNOW

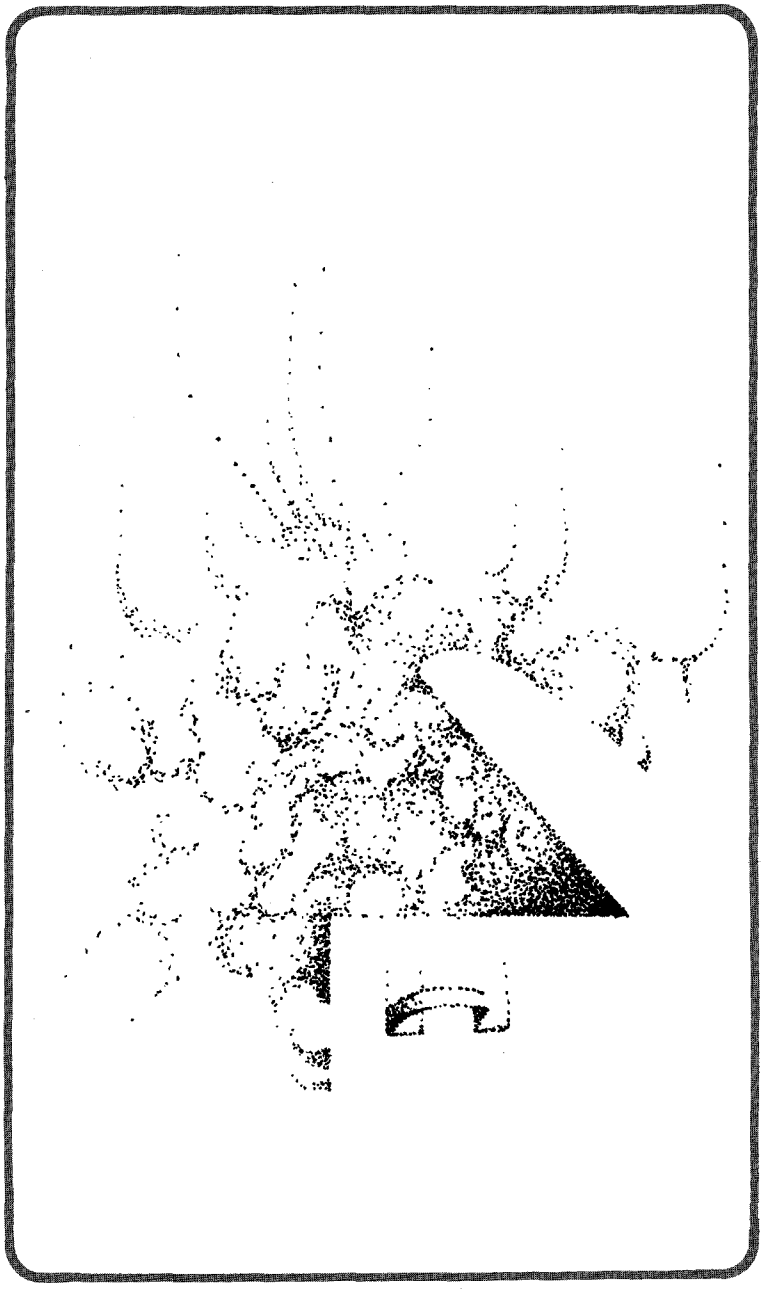
The attic trunk opens to dust,
its mothball breath unfolding with wools
set there last spring when we felt
we might be sharing the last
of our seasons together;
but now, a bonus of days.

The hooded jackets, their gloves
supple enough to eat; deep in one pocket,
a kleenex, grey and untouchable
as a dead mouse found in the rafters.

Then come the leggings harsh as wicker,
and boots ready for the back fields
where toboggans run all winter,
and a forgotten helmet
fitting no one this year.

Clothing done, we turn to outer things:
gutters banked with leaves, the shed
waiting to be stacked with wood;

Nothing so suits such a day
as the raised arm falling, making its mark
on the crack of any log, scattering slabs
enough to warm the bones through
the given nights ahead.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JIM HALL

RECORDING RECORDING

I never met this fellow
before/he smiled so much
it made me dizzy/then before
he told me what he'd come to
talk about he asked if he
could record my voice our
conversation/that he liked to
go back over certain events
and listen between the lines
for words our bodies mumbled
or something of that sort/I
said flatly no/I don't want
this moment to be anymore
sacred than it has to be/
but he said well if that's
the way you feel about it
but I don't plan to use it
against you or anything I
just like to re-examine
certain moments/it's like
photography/he kept smiling
and he had very long clean
hair and he was so gentle
and at peace and correct/
and he didn't mind eye contact
so I felt like a bastard
refusing him his hobby/and
I said O.K. go ahead turn it
on but I don't approve of this/
it stunts your memory/he turned
it on and we sat and watched it
go around for a minute/then
he asked me a question about
writing poetry

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAMES MOORE

AT THE CONCERT

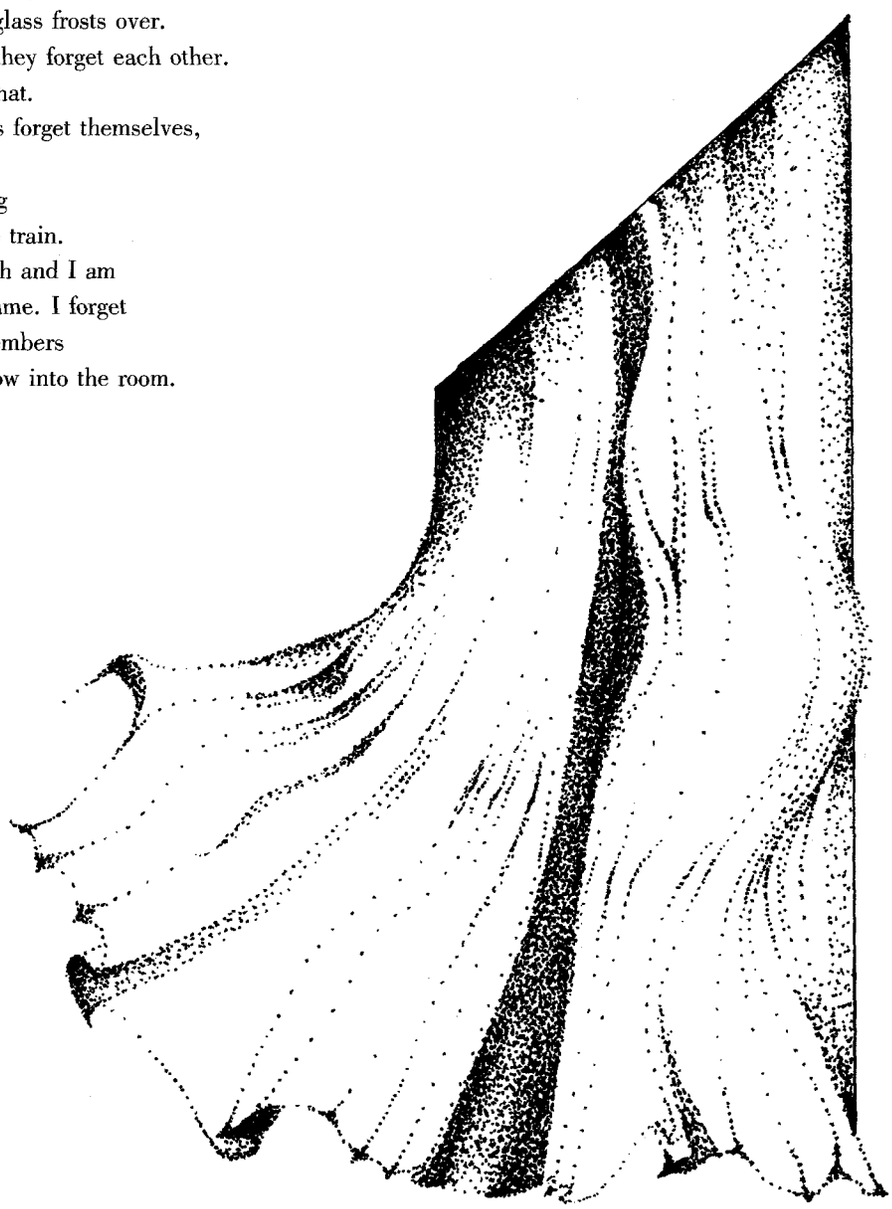
It is the violinist I watch
and the player of the cello. She puts
the carved wood between her knees. She watches him,
the violinist, the young man with the layer of pimples under his skin
and the long hair. He wears a suit with a vest,
he is all there, in the music and she too shakes her head,
bites her lip as the music whips out from under her wrists.
When it comes to the encore, the Brahms,
a fine sweat covers their bodies.
They are young.
They have never made love,
but cries and whispers move in the space between instrument and instrument.
The secret layer of their bodies' water,
how their eyes swim! The pianist is somewhere else,
far away in a corner. They have won contests,
they have never seen each others' bodies
and yet they know, how cello and violin trail each other,
one after the other like a comb sliding through long hair.
Brahms, the insidious low moan of the cello,
her head suddenly bent to the cello's body, the long black hair
down over her face while the violin is high and flat under his chin,
his eyes, looking straight ahead at the bent figure of the woman.
When the music stops, they stand and take the applause.
They are still inside the music and look first one way and then the other,
confused, as if wakened from a dream.
All of us rise, all of the animals rise and stretch, turn our bodies
  back and forth
on the stems of our spines. Covertly I look at the young ones.
How casually they stand with the rich old wood of their instruments.
They are chatting now, even laughing. Secretly I watch them
put on their coats and put their instruments away in their cases.
It is late. Someone is passing hot apple cider
but it is time to go home and they will not stay.
An older woman escorts them to the door and they are gone.
The rest of us shuffle our feet back and forth, gulp the cider,
hot spices on our throats, our faces flushed and expectant
as if we ourselves were musicians about to bend ourselves
to bodies we had never touched before, to flesh for the first time
on a Sunday afternoon; our parents gone, the whole world
waiting with hushed breath for our bodies to touch for the first time.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

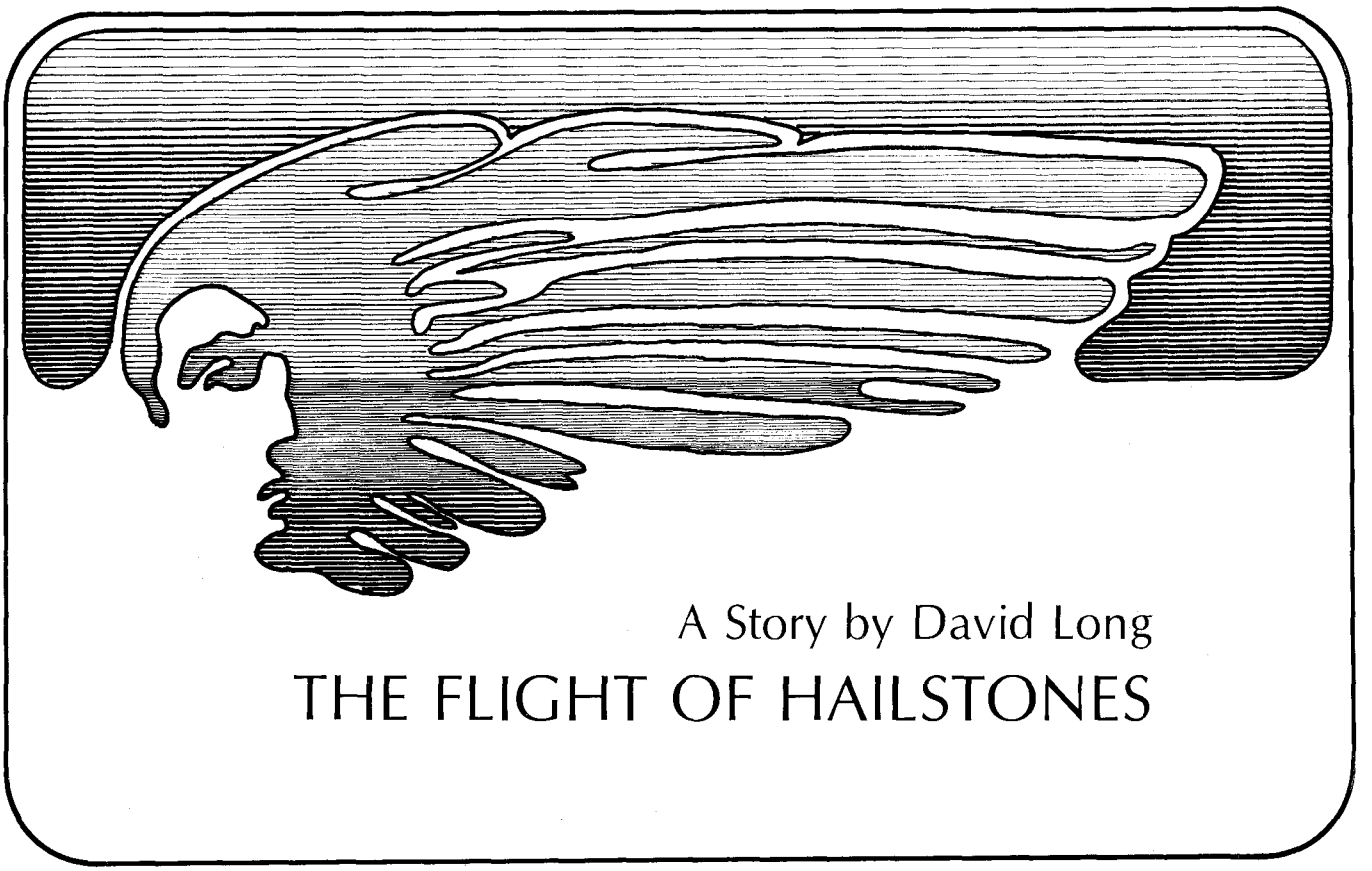
JOEFFREY BARTMAN

WHAT COULD BE SILENCE

The long curtains blow into the room and light,
asleep in its moon house, has disappeared
and left me with what could be silence.
I forget everyone, everyone else.
Friends, blood relatives, current heartbreaks.
I forget money, I forget clothing in a pile
at the foot of the bed. I turn back the clock,
the blueprint for the melting of ice.
A diagram in memory's glass frosts over.
I forget my parents and they forget each other.
I fall in love but forget that.
Turning in sleep, dreams forget themselves,
dreams are not forgotten.
The future rocks lurching
downhill like an overdue train.
Time takes its photograph and I am
different and I am the same. I forget
my life and my life remembers
and the long curtains blow into the room.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A Story by David Long

THE FLIGHT OF HAILSTONES

"What you'll have to do," Margaret said that first day, fumbling for professional distance, "is get used to your own sounds. Your heart. Your nerves. . ." I looked down at the chewed-off hairs on the backs of my hands.

"You're sure it's okay? Experimenting on your friends," I said.

"It's your attitude," she said, smiling. "It's up to you."

"I feel okay about it. I mean, I'm not *worried*. I'm pretty open."

"There's fear," she said.

It was late in June. My denim shirt with the white studded snaps was brand new, sleeves rolled. Margaret loomed above the littered stainless steel desk in her office at the institute, pointing with several sheets of stapled Xeroxing as she spoke. It was a good four months before T.R.—her old friend, my old friend—the man she'd married one weekend she'd come home from grad school, would spin out of the Club Rendezvous on Highway 10 one night late with a gutful of a new idea, and hurtle his reconditioned Firebird into the east wall of their house, aimed like a last curse at the spot where Margaret's bed, formerly their bed, lay.

"Of course," she said, "you've taken LSD, haven't you?"

Knowing that I used to. Back when.

"They tell me it's like that," she said.

"You shouldn't let the fear get rolling," she said. "Of course, you know that."

I looked up at Margaret's eyes.

"Think of it as a bird on your shoulder. After a while you may be glad to have something that constant."

The summers we were all in high school together Margaret was tanned luxuriously, and even though she was a bit older and taller, we went to the drive-in a couple times. Nights long back. I hear empty Budweiser cans rolling down the gravel incline between cars. All of us interchangeable. Later it seemed like she matured past beauty into something more extreme, more unbalanced. It didn't seem so important. Now poor sleep darkened her eyes, and her hands, folded on loose papers in front of her, were too white.

"Make it a tool," she said.

"Laugh once," I said.

Since I started to teach at the junior high, my summers have been mostly empty. I don't like summer much anyway; Victoria and I aren't ourselves. We talk of taking trips out of our valley, but the camping stuff stays in the closet below the overcoats. We sleep without sheets in that close room and sometimes say things we don't mean late at night. So Margaret's suggestion came along at a good time. I was doing nothing; suddenly I was asked to feel nothing.

When I got home Victoria was still out. I stood on the balcony, sniffed burning beef on the breeze. The city sweltered in its own trapped-in-the-valley odors. The eastbound

---

DAVID LONG lives and works in Kalispell, Montana. Other fiction of his has been published in Epoch, Confrontation, *and* Intro #6.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jet swooped in over the mountains, carved a tight circle through the updrafts, settling out of sight to earth. "Adrenalin," Victoria told me one day as we drove through the mountains, her fingers curled over the door handle, looking straight front, "takes *hours* to go away." I touched the stubble on my face, enjoyed the stiff tingle against my fingertips. I checked the kitchen for a note.

Inside the oven I found a slab of white fish thawing. The house was immaculate. On the dining room table, which was glass-topped, supported by four wrought iron legs, as usual, dust-free, lay a blue and white tile of Islamic design, and on that an oval glass bowl, filled near its rim with water, lukewarm to my fingers, where a single burst of white lilac floated.

Which was perfectly Victoria. Except that the flowers outside our house, the inherited rosebushes, for instance, are sickly, do not get their water, parch like the ground itself.

I returned to the balcony, lay back in the familiar rattan chaise and closed my eyes. Some time later I heard Victoria at the front door, her key wiggle in the sticky lock, heard the little metal things on the bottom of her purse strike glass, the slapping of her sandal heels against her feet.

"Victory," I said, our joke, eyes still closed.

"Umph. . ." she said, something in her mouth.

I peeked: the Navajo barrette.

"Clara called," she said. "Hysterical."

"What now?"

"Nothing. Nothing."

I opened my eyes and saw Victoria, those blue eyes, the oval face, framed against brown stucco and flowering vines. And her black hair.

"You know how she hates herself the next day."

"It's always the next day," I said.

Why her residue of affection for Clara?

That night, tipping back in my chair, looking at the few drowned grains of rice on my plate, I almost told Victoria the whole story, what I'd signed on for. I was going to, but then decided to wait and see. "So corny," she would have said, maybe, meaning science in general. Not seeing what she does, cleaning children's teeth, as being in any way scientific, abstract, even as she consults the little badge pinned to her white belt for the slightest discoloration from too much X-ray. I wondered what kind of things Victoria decided not to tell me. Surely they were not factual, because she offers these things without reluctance. But imaginings, longings. As long as I've known her I don't think I've ever heard Victoria say "I wish."

The first time was easy. As I watched the little drama of Victoria dressing for work, all I could think about was Margaret's description of the tank. Like water someone's forgotten in a tea kettle, I thought later.

I undressed in the room off the lab, wondered if the situation called for modesty, felt silly. Margaret looked me up and down, nurse-like, then smiling easily. I grinned out of control. She rolled down the latex mask over my nose and chin and we checked the flow of air. Then I went inside. In the water: no feeling between my fingers, hardly the slightest vibration, no noise, nothing to see, and only the most distant taste along the roof of my mouth I imagined was lip gloss from Victoria's good morning kiss.

I fought the urge to sleep; later found myself, in fact, very much awake, curious, suspended. For a long time I witnessed an orderly barrage of memories pried loose from their storage places. No hallucination. I remembered things, saw in the vivid mind's eye faces of people I'd never be in a room with again, suddenly relived, in a distant and painless way, old embarrassments. I saw myself accidently breaking a friend's eardrum with a tennis ball as he stood innocently waist-deep in someone's swimming pool. Later, I fixed on the image of a mass baptism I'd seen on television as a kid: adult converts standing together on the muddy bank of a river, patiently ecstatic, one by one, stepping into the water, into the hands of the Negro preacher, their white robes streaked with silty water, glistening as they emerged, smiling as if now nothing could ever hurt them again.

Nothing resembling fear.

Margaret looked nervous as she removed me from the tank. I thought it was a kind of excitement. Back in my street clothes, I sat on her dusty couch as the daily late afternoon storm broke, drops splattering and clinging to her screens. Later when I walked home the pavement would be hot still, the fine dust on everything hardly disturbed. Margaret gave me a Pepsi, touched my cheek as she leaned over, eyebrows raised.

"Yes," I said, "I'm fine. It felt. . .good."

I don't like the sound of my voice, don't like to think of other people knowing me by it, especially my students. I like to avoid hearing it played back. Margaret read the questions to me from a yellow legal pad, not ad-libbing this first time. My account was half-hearted. "Physically, like falling. Only not down. . . Just falling."

I suddenly realized she hadn't ever been in the tank herself, wondered why.

She switched the recorder off and we talked again, like friends.

"I wanted more," I said.

"Just distracted," she said. "Very common."

But she was worried about T.R. "Abusive," she said, that word sounding like she just siphoned it from the police record. For a time there after high school, T.R. and I had almost been intimates, joking together as we put up drywall, driving north some weekends. But it seemed to me that he'd somehow shot by his prime too early, was belligerent, self-pitying; still under thirty but beaten. There were things Margaret didn't know; for instance, the ugly scene at my bachelor party when T.R. cold-cocked a waitress. I never told Margaret that; T.R. didn't remember. Still, I couldn't help but like him. My weakness is like Victoria's. And of course, there were things I didn't imagine were in him.

"And how's Vicky?" Margaret said, "I haven't seen her."

"Fine. Fine," I said.

Of all the pleasing aspects of Victoria's nakedness, it is her hands. . . If I'd known her as a child, I would've seen these same hands, knowledgeable, tough-skinned, sectioned by crevices, clutching a lucky coin, or tearing the branch off a milkweed plant so she could watch the caterpillars webbed to the underside of its leaves blossom into Monarchs. Victoria likes *things*. Her hands isolate, hold them, mount them as if in settings. She stands before the dressing table on a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Saturday morning, lifting to the light half a twelve-year molar she wears around her neck on a rawhide thong, pearly, rimmed with a bloody streak; she seems tribal, a throwback. Or this is how I imagine her.

Victoria doesn't wear a wedding ring, though I often see her holding it in her hand, or looking through it, then replacing it on the narrow shelf at eye level in the bedroom, beside an antique china cocaine jar emblazoned with orange dragons and a miniature laughing Buddha carved from tusk. We make love in the late afternoon when the sun blasts across the valley through the deep gold cotton of the western curtains. I lick the feathering of black hairs that divides her stomach into two halves hard as paving-stones. I see her head, the thick strands of black hair cut into short bangs at her forehead, left long and falling off the pillow in back, damp against her neck. I see the hollow below her collarbone where the tips of her fingers rest slightly curled inwards, her wrist lying over the rise of her breast, which almost disappears when she lies on her back, and the nipple which is so large and the color of dying oak leaves.

Victoria was watering the houseplants.

"Again?" she said, picking at a brown leaf.

I checked my pocket for money, pawed through mixed layers of newspapers and circulars for the car keys.

"I'd love you to come along," I said. "But you won't, will you?"

"I don't understand. This is dying."

"Vick?"

"Go. Have a good time."

In the hallway I smelled the essence of dead fish she administers to the hanging ferns. I crossed the worthless enclosure of twigs and burnt crabgrass that was our lawn. I dropped the key in trash between the bucket seats. The inside light had burned out months before. Feeling, I ran my blind finger into an open safety pin, and when I raised my hand against the dash lights, it stuck there.

It was like the change a few minutes make in the sun's angle on water.

In the beginning it was her distance I loved. The glow of agate. Lover's talk. I never wanted to think about what she might love in me. I never cared about how the valves of the heart work; when I chord a difficult song, I'm ruined if I have to stop. I learn from her. I amuse her. Am I a good lover for her? When I open my eyes her lips are whitening against her teeth, not parting, her chin trembling like the earth near a train. Am I too loud for her, too unplanned? The rituals of her routine are efficient, satisfying; I need them in her as much as she does. But as the third summer of marriage moved toward drought, I saw the first flashes of the rough foundation on which serenity folds her wings. Victoria seemed even quieter.

I confront Victoria with the evidence of our silence. In the sun room, she holds up her four identically painted fingernails of one hand, runs her tongue over them and says to me, "Don't say that. We're fine. Fine."

She leaves the room.

Victoria's an only child. She recalls being happy; she considers her expectations ordinary. Except that, she told me the first time we ate breakfast together, she doesn't want to see her life revolving around any one man. She'd like to have a child, several maybe, by different men. With luck, one would have the wild red hair of her father. When I listen to the carefully rebuilt episodes of her life they have the charm of fictions. I don't have a sense of myself as a character the way she does, the way every only child I've ever known does: caring enough about a life to polish the particulars, so that in retelling, it's a nearly perfect artifact. Later, when I knew we'd be together a long time, I understood that Victoria's views of marriage belonged to the fiction. But I loved it.

I sometimes wonder how many lovers before me were invented. Or if, in the hard resonance of her solitude, she was inventing me. The one story she won't tamper with is her father's suicide. She won't talk about it at all. I look into her eyes and I never know for sure if I'm seeing calm or perfectly balanced terrors.

Margaret wanted my feelings. In the early days of sensory deprivation, eighteen years ago when John Lilly was still working at Bethesda, there were different implications: undersea exploration, the space program. They were hunting limits: how long can a person be alone without cracking up, what *kind* of person, what kind of strange things happen in the mind. Margaret briefed me on all that. And then she said, "I want to see what this can do for a person's normal life. As a technique. . ."

The tape recorder grew more familiar. More than once as I felt the warm water suddenly unplug my ear, I wondered if Victoria would be jealous of all the time I was spending on myself. So unlike me.

"I've been going out at night," I told Margaret during one of our talks. "A couple places that have bands and I don't know anyone."

"Alone?"

"Vicky doesn't like music so much. You know, never did."

"Do you still dance?"

"It's good to have all that going on around you, for me anyway."

"Because of the tank? To fill in. . .?"

"I wouldn't say that."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Margaret is writing, as always, flicking back the strand of hair that won't quite stay out of her eyes. It's getting late. Something's coming back to me, possibly from last night or last night's dream. I am among old men, in an old men's eating and drinking place. Here a row of canted stools, polished by an eighty-two year procession of shiny brown pants' seats. A man takes, by my own timing on the wall clock, fifteen minutes to open his fresh tin of Copenhagen, and accomplishing this, raises a ragged pinch to his mouth, tucking it in the sour crevice between lip and gums, and stares, I imagine, right through me, forgetting for a while to close his mouth. It is no surprise to me why I'm here. I am eating eggs and hash browns which are, of course, no good for me. And here in front of me is the cook, steward of old men. He is fat, unsavory coloring in the puffy space where his chin should be, and the firm little smile, as if molded from pink rubber, gives witness that he knows he won't get that far himself.

Not even a jukebox.

Not long ago a place very much like this one burned in the early hours of a December morning, taking with it two old men overlooked by the boys who ran through clearing rooms. The longing to romanticize is strong, to imagine some animal skin and fur over the baldness of pain. But pain is all that's left, nothing more complicated assembling them there. Pain, that so different from its noisy face on the young, makes the old invisible, makes them into transparencies, indistinguishable from a chair or bedsprings or dirty ticking. Why can't I just walk away?

Also I remember a morning years ago, my mother standing at the back window, seeming to study how the snow swept across the alfalfa, stabbing a huge knife through a grapefruit. I read to her from the morning paper about a woman who had been scalped by an escalator on the third floor of Filene's. "Humiliating," I think I said. She looked at me, pumping the serrated spoon along the cavity of the grapefruit. "Phoo," she said after a minute, "every way's ridiculous."

My life has been so free from pain that sometimes I wander into its strange light. Here I am fascinated by the cooking of eggs, always pairs. The first egg is held over the little bed of scalding grease and struck against its mate and drained and as the first one begins to whiten on the grill the second is cracked on the rim of a white bowl. And now for the first time I understand why we don't have eggs in our house, why Victoria told me when we were first married, "They frighten me." That was that.

Imagine sand under your tongue. Sand works into the mucus of the oyster, stirs its defenses, urges it to build a wall, an inward-looking eye, a talisman. Imagine the vagina. Imagine the stalks of plants thickening as winter is sensed as if for the first time. Victoria was maintaining her silence.

When Margaret met me at the door I saw the blackened eye, the upper lip puffed out as if hiding a mothball, cracked and resealed leaving a history in crusted blood. The office smelled of being closed up.

I made instant coffee for us on her hot plate. I set her white mug down on the pull-out board of the desk. She sat in the swivel chair, turning it absently with one foot.

"When it gets bad enough, you'll leave him," I said.

"Is this bad enough?" she said, clasping her arms in front of her. "Do other people have simple marriages?" She looked straight at me. "What burns," she said, "is he's faithful. Completely, I *know* it. What good is it?"

"I'm sorry," I said.

Nothing cute about this bruise: her face was lopsided, runners of blood leaking into the right eye. We talked close to an hour before I went inside. If the weeks of floating there hadn't produced any miracles, it might have been because of the greater load summer was putting on me, watching even our evergreens die and blow away. I couldn't ask how he'd done it.

In the tank I couldn't shake the picture of T.R. slumped down in the tall-backed leather chair in their livingroom, arms reaching up and hanging over the sides like a fallen scarecrow. I saw Margaret trying to ignore him. I saw him stand and grab a glass paperweight with a perfectly frozen pink carnation inside, and shake it at her as if in some kind of evidence. She had on a nightgown. I imagined it red, long and too sheer. Her yellow hair was in a shaggy butch, the whole effect, I saw now, graceless, bogus: the need to excite somebody betraying her badly. I heard T.R.'s erratic tenor. "Just some dumb cunt," he was shouting after her as she ran up the shag-carpeted half-flight to their bedroom. She shut the door and he threw the glass ball at it, the veneer denting slightly, the entombed carnation careening into the bathroom where it spun a moment on the small avocado tiles. I imagined her coming to the door and saying something dramatic like "I'm calling the cops," and T.R. tearing the nightgown off her and smelling it, and her pushing him toward the door almost gently, and him then slapping her across the lips. I imagined she didn't cry. She said, "Get out. *Please!*" and he looked for a second, turned and went to the kitchen to make himself a sandwich, and there cut himself with a serrated bread knife. He started screaming and, this is what I imagined to be Margaret's mistake, she went to him.

The blood was dripping quickly onto the white porcelain of the sink. She walked past him to the refrigerator, took out an icecube and held it wrapped in a paper napkin against her lip. "What the fuck?" T.R. said. Margaret said, "Why don't you just leave?" And then he said, "Well, Jesus Christ, I'm bleeding to death here." "No, you're not," she said. "You're not."

He ran cold water over his finger as she stood, one hand on hip barefoot on the indoor-outdoor carpet, staring up and down at her husband, looking at the coins of blood on his sweatshirt, wondering whether to go and give the finger a look, or make him get out, which she was not sure she could manage or would appreciate the next morning, or just turn and leave things, lock herself in the bedroom and sleep. He turned the water off, squinted at her and, I imagined, mouthed his ace: "You think I fucking *like* selling cars. . ." And then he picked up the hard roll in his fist and crumbled it onto the rug, grabbed up the brown length of salami from the formica, swished it through the air, finally, before she could understand, backhanding her with it.

Was that how?

A scene that might've been funny in, say, a movie?

She should have stayed in the bedroom, given rage the

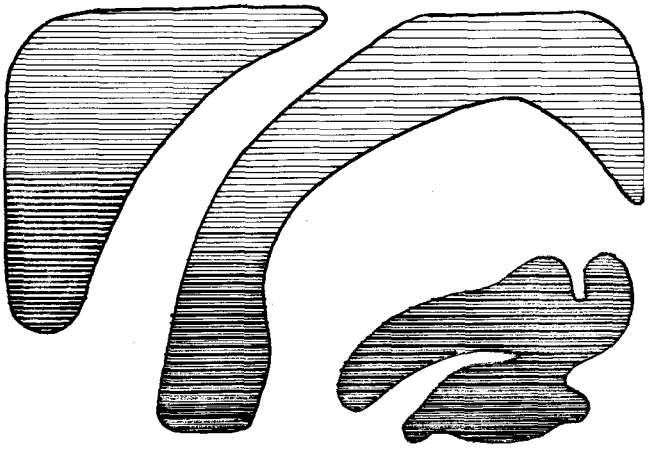
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

empty stadium. I thought I understood Margaret's problem, the weakness we share: we suspect that what people do can be explained.

I tried to focus on my breathing, listening with all the patient attention I could manage to the regular movement of it in and out of me, counting as I'd learned in meditation. Soon I lost the beats. I imagined I was standing invisibly in our bedroom. Victoria was curled up facing the wall, sound asleep, and I was awake, staring out the window at the brittle hedge. I walked over to my sleeping body and saw Margaret's bloody eye shining in my dark face, like blood in the yoke of an egg. I had all the time in the world. The body didn't move except for that awful eye which twitched whenever I leaned over for a closer look.

The fair witness.

The eyeball glistened like Mars in the morning sky. It became white after a while, extremely luminous. I floated in its light. I sensed the slightly different warmth of tears inside the latex mask, miles away. There was only a white sphere, shadowed at its edges, hanging in perfect darkness. It was as if the image had gravity. I was sucked into it, descending wildly through the spectrum of my fears, of being completely alone, the only person left alive, squatting in the smoldering wreckage of a house, a planet, forgetting our language, forgetting. . .; emerging into a space of absolute calm, the whiteness stretching all around. I contemplated it in this new silence, worshipped it, listened to it, felt my dimensionless body rushing at unimaginable speed, thinking *this can't last* as I slipped through its shimmering skin, and believed at that moment I'd fallen into the mouth of God, or worse.



The sun had set at the funnel end of the valley. I emptied the ice from the bottom of my third Bloody Mary over the redwood railing and walked back to the living room. One of Victoria's sandals lay in the hollow of her chair where it had squirmed from her foot as she'd sat, reading maybe, or just looking out the window as she does, one long leg folded under her.

I listened for the sound of a car door, or the phone. I let the house darken around me. I went to the kitchen, took the tin marked *whole cloves* from the spice cabinet, stood in the broken light of the nearest streetlamp passing through Wandering Jew on the sill, breaking off little squares of blond hash with my thumbnail and smoking. Earlier, as I climbed the steep short-cut to our house, I regretted walking out on Margaret without my interview. I looked down at the pile of wooden matchsticks collecting on the cold formica. The melancholy and distance I associated with the tank came back, coating me with an indigo film, and I wondered why any of us go out to meet our fears. Or in.

From the balcony I could see the city through its haze, and over the mountains a few stars, the washed-out constellations. And then, hours gone, it was all gray, blue spruce hills. Victoria was squeezing my shoulder.

"Weren't you even worried? Didn't you wonder. . .?"

There was condensation on my glasses, my face. "I. . .Jesus, I trust you, I guess."

"You shouldn't."

"What?"

She looked off.

"What does that mean," she said. "*You trust me.*"

"I don't know. You always have reasons."

"For what?"

"Well, not calling."

"I called. Where were you?"

"I was here. I didn't go anywhere."

She dropped her jacket to the railing, stuck her chin out slightly, turning, "No," she said. "I didn't call." She looked at me. "I was going to."

She walked into the house and I sat up on the chaise thinking she'd be right back. Finally I went inside and she was undressed, under the covers, eyes closed.

"I'm tired," she said. "I'll talk to you in the morning."

"It *is* the goddamn morning."

She rolled over.

"Where were you?" I didn't mean this to sound hard, yet it was, too hard, like a husband. I wanted more than anything to quietly get my clothes off and pull Victoria over to me and sleep. As helpless as I'd been earlier, in the presence of what things lay deepest inside me, now I couldn't relax enough to sleep until she talked—the first blush of biochemical frustration.

"Okay. Sure. It's none of my business. I'd just like to know."

She wasn't moving.

"Vick? Are you going to tell me?"

"I don't know if I *can* tell you."

"Huh?"

"Or if I will."

"What can't you tell me?"

"Please quit it."

"Okay," I said. "Fine."

"Good."

She rolled over again, holding the pillow over the side of her face. She said my name.

I bent over her again.

"Will you call in for me? I want to sleep."

In the kitchen I touched the pyre of wooden matchsticks on the counter, remembered the serenity with which, seven hours earlier, I had listed, then fleshed out for myself, all

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the things Victoria could be doing. I remembered touching my finger to the tissue-like leaf of the *aloe* cutting suspended in a cup of water. "Squeeze it and the juice will heal burns," she said once. As I stood alone in my dark house, I was not frantic. I was calm. It had not seemed possible that anything bad would be happening to Victoria. Was I excited?

It was even lighter in the bedroom. From the doorway I could see the brass handles on the dresser shining dimly. She was sitting up in bed now, watching me.

"Listen, I went over to see Clara. She called and you weren't home yet and she sounded really bad, so, you know, I went over."

"Okay."

"I didn't want you thinking I was holding out on you."

"You could've called."

I sat on the far corner of the bed unlacing my boots.

"Was she okay, then?"

"We talked about her killing herself. She can't do it alone. Talk about it, I mean."

She stopped.

"Anyway, she was making bread to console herself. We talked a long time and then some guy she'd balled once called her up and she decided to go out with him."

"So?"

"So, well, you know, she talked me into finishing up the bread for her. Jesus, her bread's always so *soggy*.

"I watched her getting dressed—all the steps. . ." she said, "and then she left and I let the bread rise a couple more times. I felt really, you know, weird. I started looking all around her place, in the drawers, her letters. Do you believe I actually read her letters? I'd never do that."

"Anything choice?"

"Oh. . . She doesn't have any secrets at all."

Then suddenly Victoria was laughing.

"I tried being cold," she said.

"What?"

"To you. But I don't have anybody else to tell."

I slid my boots into the corner and looked at her.

"When I went over," she said, "there was a guy carrying in boxes downstairs—those weird girls moved out. So later when I'd put the bread in the oven he came up to the door and it occurred to me that he thought I was Clara."

Victoria presses her thigh against Clara's gas range, following the steam with her eyes as it drifts from the mouth of the tea kettle. Victoria pours hot water through the crumpled mesh of Clara's strainer, fills two of Clara's raku cups. She cuts the fresh bread before it has a chance to cool, scared to death, smiling, laying the steaming bread on a plate, opening the boysenberry jam jar, scared to death, fingertip tracing the outline of the calico squares on Clara's kitchen table, smiling, at him in the other chair, whose head and pony tail move so simply against Clara's herb chart, who is rolling a smoke over the open tin of Bugler, who wears a knife on his belt, and she is thinking, *sorry, sorry for the heavy bread*.

"When his hands touched me it was so cold."

"Cold?"

"Like waking up."

Victoria feels the lips of another man, the teeth, pulling on her nipple. Clara's pillow falls to the floor. Victoria feels the coils of beard against her leg. Victoria smells Clara in the sheets, smells sage so strong on his skin.

"I made him keep talking to me."

He tells her anything. How easy. The Cheyenne word for quail. Victoria pictures herself jumping up from the bed, clutching up a sheet, saying, "You'll have to get out of here, I'm not Clara, I'm married." Or Victoria pictures herself unmoved under the stranger's caress. Or she imagines it's nothing, reclining later in drifting smoke, saying, "Hey, close that door on your way out, will you?" But Victoria thinks, *I know what I'm doing here*.

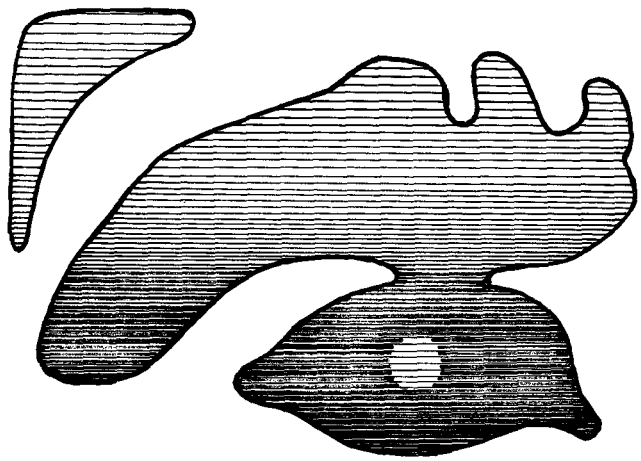
"I kept thinking to myself, *be good, be good*."

"And?"

"He kissed my toes."

Victoria touched my cold chest.

"Do you understand I'm not *confessing* anything?"



We crouch under the trembling cords of the old clothes line where I've thrown open the blue chenille bedspread. I do not mourn summer. The hailstones crash around us, beating up dust between the tufts of dry grass. Victoria holds one, a white marble, a pearl, showing it to me. Near us, in our first garden, the leaves shake and the tin siding nearby roars like dark applause, and then those leaves begin to break from their stalks. "Pain," Victoria says.

Margaret never got the chance to write up her findings. I'd like to say I never went back to the tank, emerging that day like Napoleon from the heart of the Great Pyramid, stricken, changed. Actually, I kept going once a week or so until late October when the season turned. Our trees are stripped. I have seen through my fear. I feel like Plenty Coups, chief of the Crow, who was shown a vision of himself as an old man dozing beneath a cottonwood. It is not that we're immortal. That night I laid Victoria's story away somewhere inside me, letting it blossom in my silent dreams, and the next day I told her about Margaret's experiments, and she laughed as I knew she would.

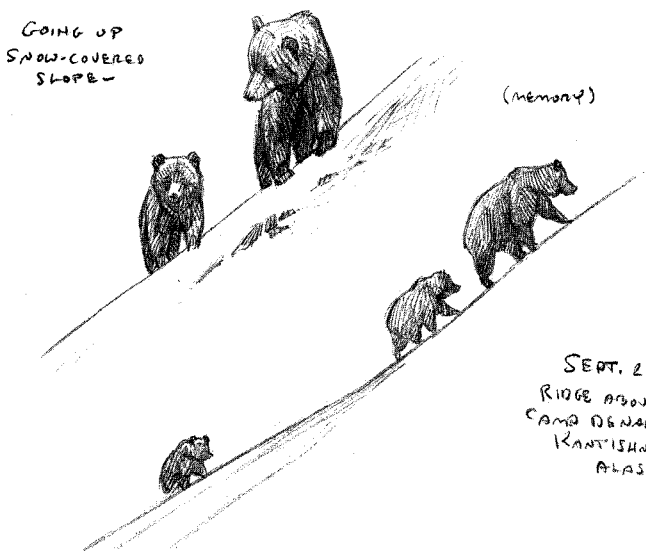
Victoria keeps the houseplants alive and she says it's no good unless you can share it. And I laugh at her, of course, loving her, another summer over, knowing that all the big trips you take by yourself. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EFFECT OF PART OF FLOCK OF REDPOLLS ALARMED FROM ALDERS & WILLOWS - WONDER LAKE, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA - OCT. 12, '56

LARGE FLOCKS FORAGING THROUGHOUT AREA E & S OF LAKE — SUNNY DAY -

(MEMORY) HUDSONIAN CHICKADEE FORAGING THROUGH SPRUCE - KANTISHNA AREA, ALASKA - SEPT. 30, '56



GOING UP SNOW-COVERED SLOPE -

(MEMORY)

SEPT. 27, '56 RIDGE ABOVE CAMP DENALI, KANTISHNA AREA, ALASKA -

(BULL POSSESSING HERD WITH TOWER TERM COW)

FLOCK OF ABOUT A DOZEN OR SO SNOW BUNTINGS LANDED BRIEFLY ON FROZEN LAKE TO FEED, REST, OR PREEN — (MEMORY & REF.) - OCT. 11, '61 DENALI LAKES, DENALI HIGHWAY, ALASKA -

(MEMORY)

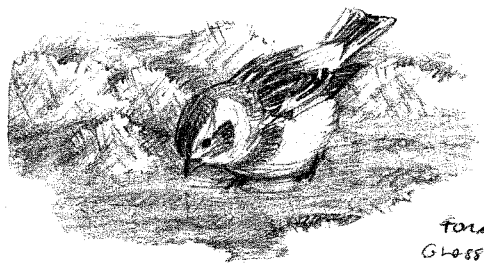
AFFECTIONATE COW — RUBBING AGAINST BULL'S NECK, BELL, FOREQUARTERS, BUT AVOIDING HIS ATTEMPTS TO MOUNT — ONE OF 8 COWS IN BULL'S VICINITY (8 9TH BEDDED DOWN IN SAME AREA) -

HE VISITED SEVERAL IN TURN, RECEIVING VARYING DEGREES OF RESPONSE —

DRIVE AWAY ANOTHER BULL THAT APPROACHED GROUP

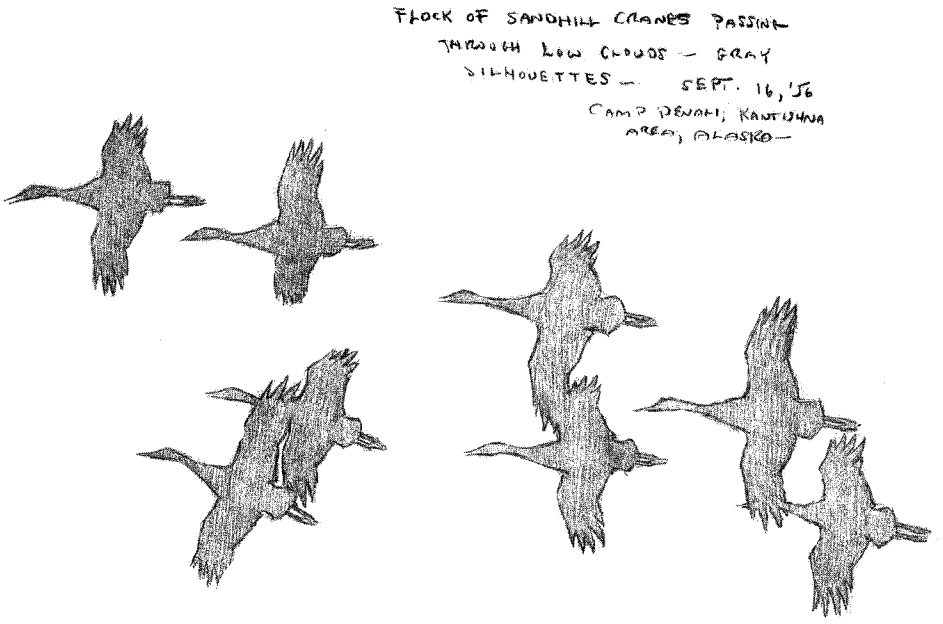
(R) MOOSE NOTED OCT. 1, '62, IN ALDERS ABOVE UPPER WOODS, NW SLOPE CACHE MT., ALASKA -

(L & BELOW) BULL BELOW A SIX OF SAME WOODS, OCT. 2, '62 -



FORAGING OVER GLOSSY, LUMPED FLOODED ICE WITH MASSES OF CRYSTALS GROWING -

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A Time of Change

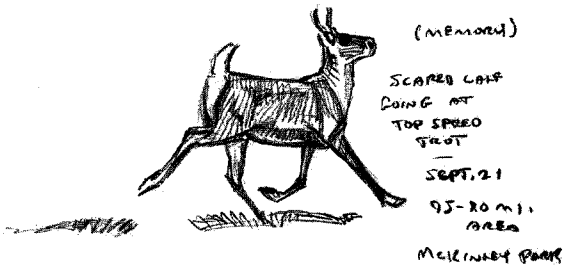
Text & Drawings by William D. Berry

In the mountains of the Alaska Range, summers are short and winter is never far away. Autumn arrives in a wave of color that hits the high ridges first, in late August, and has flooded the landscape with glowing reds and yellows by early September. The brilliance soon fades, and if snow has not come by the end of September the land lies tawny and gray, the color of dry grasses and bare tundra twigs. Usually snow has settled in before October, and by the middle of that month, ice has stilled the streams and covered all ponds. Freeze-up is complete.

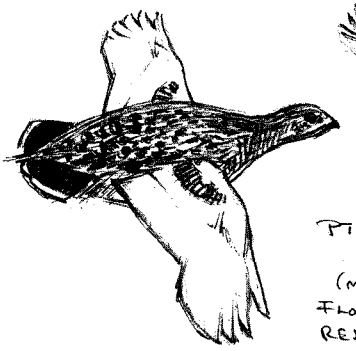
This rush of fall brings an excitement to the air that affects every inhabitant of the region. The migrant birds gather in restless flocks awaiting the first snows to send them southward, and their passage is heralded by bugling legions of cranes, already departed from the arctic coast, whose flocks rendezvous high over the mountains in the thermals that rise on sunny September days. The resident ptarmigan show daily a greater sprinkling of white feathers as winter plumage replaces their summer brown. A beaver colony, quiet all summer, takes on the appearance of an automated Christmas window display as the fat rodents swim and haul and waddle and cut, repairing dams and lodges and bringing in a winter's supply of bright-foliaged autumn twigs. Black and grizzly bears amble through a sweet harvest of berries until snow blankets their repast, and then curl up in sheltered dens to ignore the winter in sleep. Bands of Dall sheep file nervously down from their summer range and hurry through alien woods and lowlands on a semiannual trek between summer and winter pastures. The moose and the caribou, as if emotionally keyed to this heightened tempo of fall, abandon their usually placid ways for the activity and tension of the annual rut. The caribou bulls that have banded together amicably all summer are suddenly consumed with the dynamics of male competition, and nervously play out their ritualistic games of dominance and territoriality in the midst of the wandering herds. Moose, ordinarily rather solitary, now roam searching for one another, the cows bawling an occasional invitation, and the bulls grunting a challenge that is emphasized at intervals by a clattering demonstration against small trees and brittle branches of what their huge antlers can do.

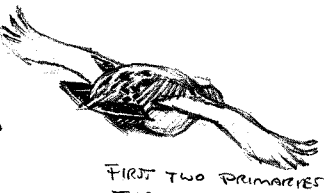
By mid-October, winter's quiet routine prevails. Snow buntings, pausing to glean wind-blown seeds from the snow, are the last of the migrant birds to leave the mountains. Twittering flocks of redpolls appear now and then, and bands of chickadees comb the forest daily for any bits of food cached or overlooked during the summer. Very small mammals like the shrews and mice have tunneled beneath the snow to avoid extreme cold, and the predators that hunt them, like the fox or wolverine, travel over the drifts with ears attuned to the squeaks and scurryings of this sub-nivean world. The wolverine is an opportunist, always on the move, equally willing to pounce on a mouse for a meal, or trail a wolf to the remnants of the larger carnivore's kill. The wolves themselves must travel widely, constantly testing the herds of caribou or sheep, the scattered moose, in their search for those individuals that strength and circumstances will combine to place at their disposal. Most of the time the land will lie silent except for the wind.

WILLIAM D. BERRY is the creator of Melissa and McGonnegal, the pretty lady and the moose (respectively) who graced the NAR's pages in the Winter of 1975. The drawings on this and the following pages were done, "mostly", in 1955-56, when Bill and his wife, Liz, were doing field research at Camp Denali, a wilderness camp outside McKinley Park, Alaska. "All of these drawings were made from life," Bill writes, "or completed at the first opportunity following the observation." The NAR is pleased to pass on to its readers the vitality of the Berrys' notebooks.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

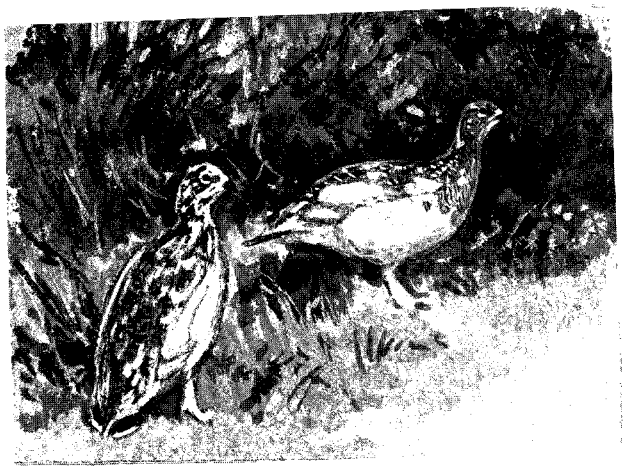




FIRST TWO PRIMARIES TURN UP AT TIPS—

PTARMIGAN IN FLIGHT, SHOWING WING SHAPE—
(MEMORY) CAMP DENALI, ALASKA—
FLOCK OF ABOUT 6 BIRDS APPARENTLY RESIDENT IN WILLOW FLATS JUST E OF CAMP THROUGHOUT SUMMER & FALL—
SEPT. 8, '55

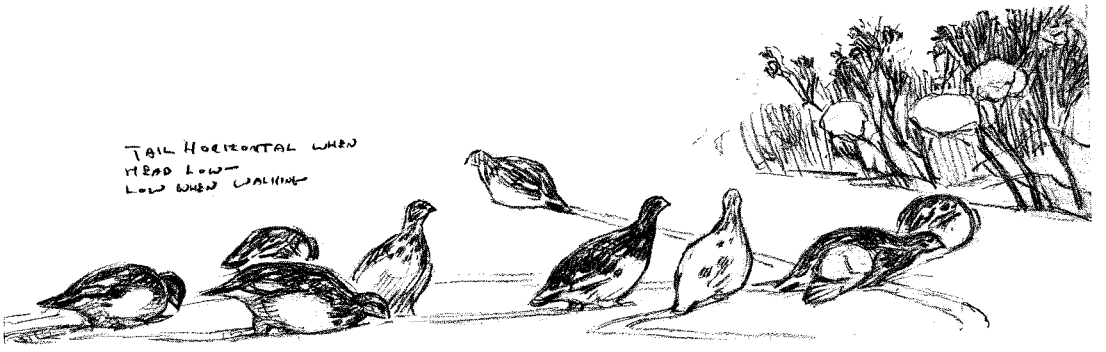
SEPT. 15, '55
PTARMIGAN IN 75-80 MI. AREA, MCKINLEY PARK — HAD WHITE UNDERPARTS) WHITE ON SOME UPPER TAIL COVERTS, A FEW WHITE FEATHERS SCATTERED OVER BACK — BIRDS USUALLY IN FLOCKS—
(MEMORY, NOTES)



SEPT. 20, '55
PAIR OF PTARMIGAN, WONDER LAKE, MCKINLEY PARK. THE MALE LOOKED AS IF WHITE PAINT HAD BEEN SPLASHED FROM HIS HEAD BACK; THE FEMALE STILL RETAINED MORE OF HER SUMMER PLUMAGE—
(MEMORY, NOTES)

(MEMORY)
70-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK
SEPT. 26, '56

PTARMIGAN IN "SNOWSHOES"—
MANY BIRDS ALMOST WHITE—

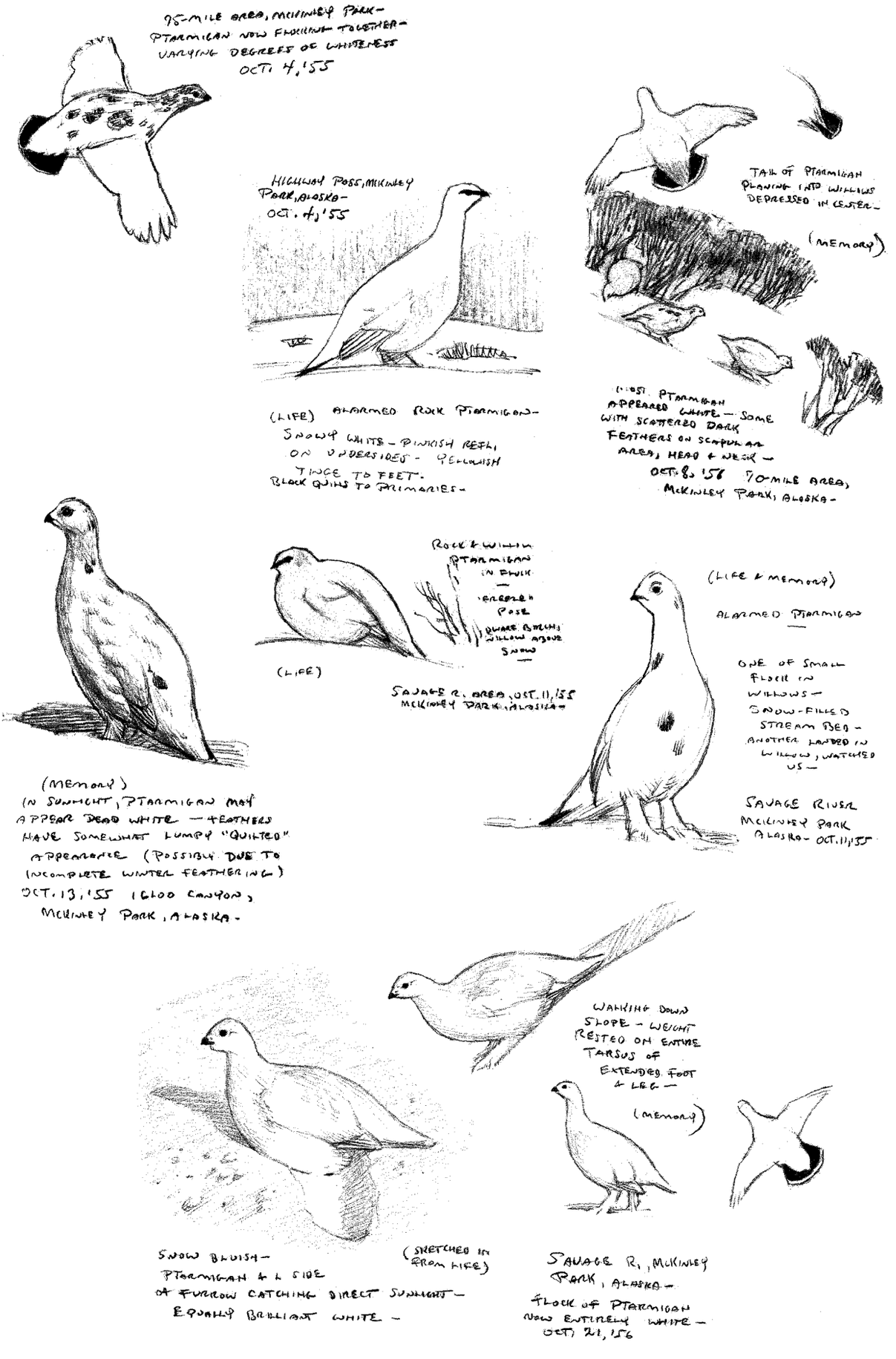


TAIL HORIZONTAL WHEN HEAD LOW—
LOW WHEN WALKING

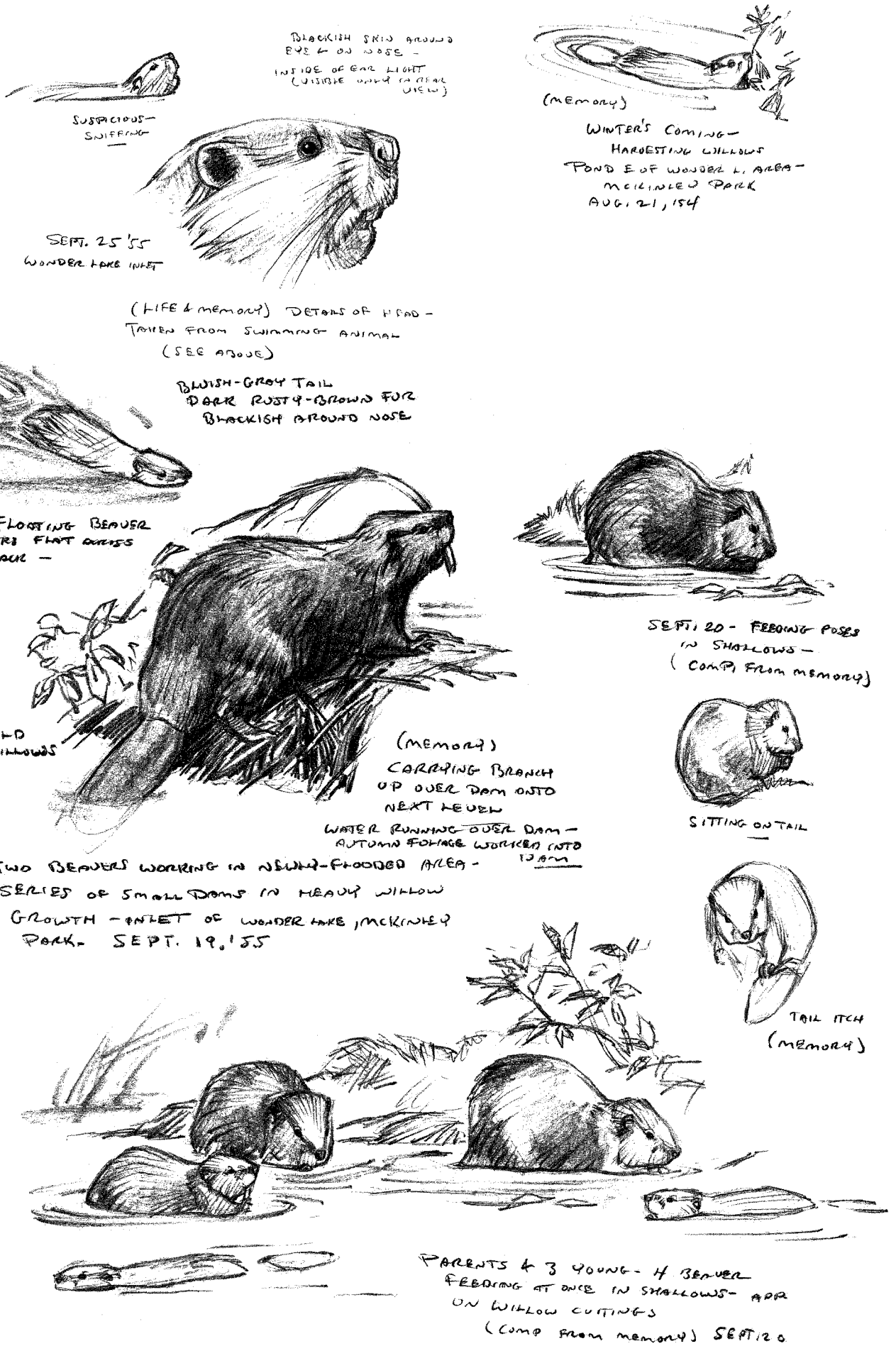
FLOCK OF PTARMIGAN FORAGING IN SNOW ON ROADS 15-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA — ALTHOUGH PTARMIGAN WERE NOT NUMEROUS IN THE AREA DURING THE SUMMER, MANY WERE GATHERED THERE NOW—
(MEMORY & REF.) SEPT. 23, '56 MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—

MOSTLY BROWN WITH WHITE FLECKING ON UPPERPARTS — WHITE BELOW — A FEW BIRDS MOSTLY WHITE—

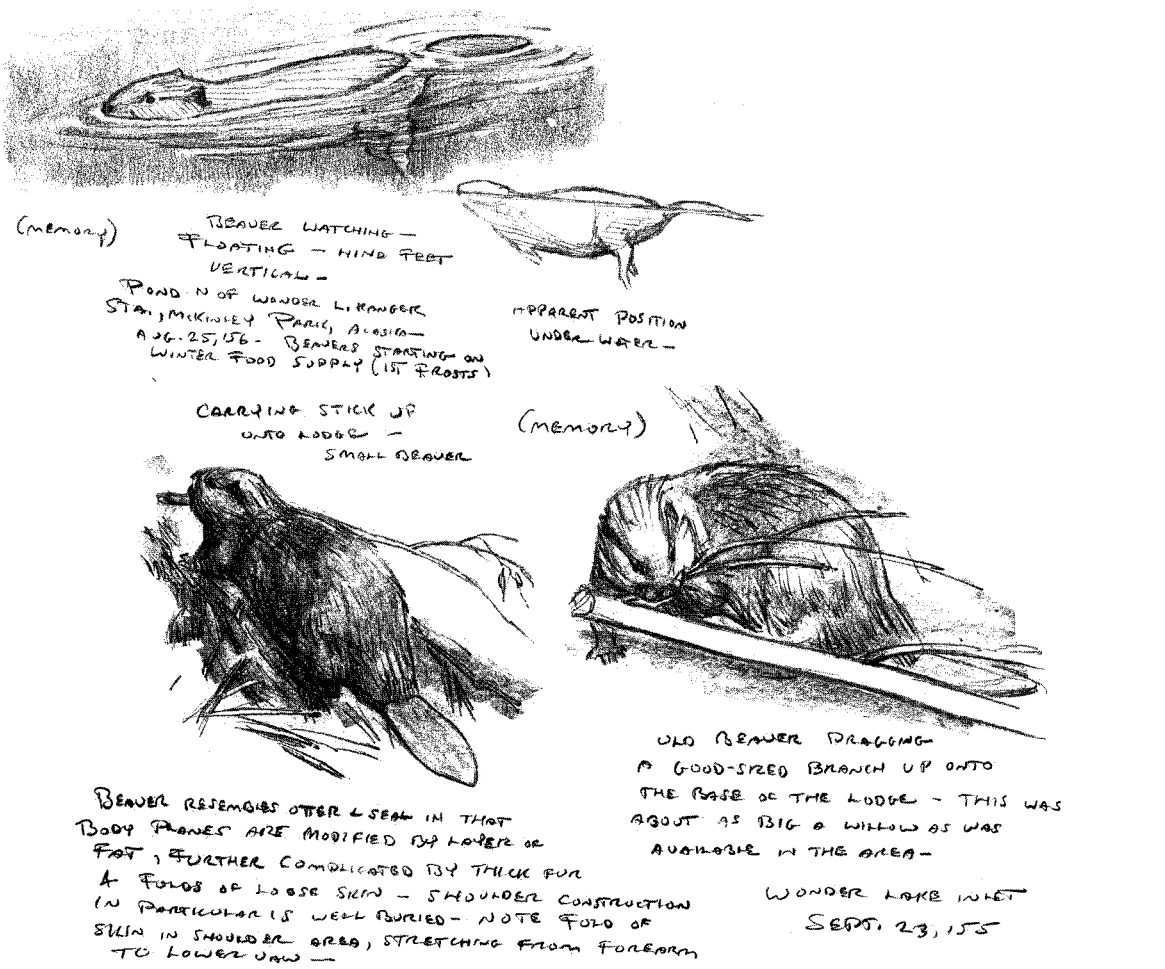
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

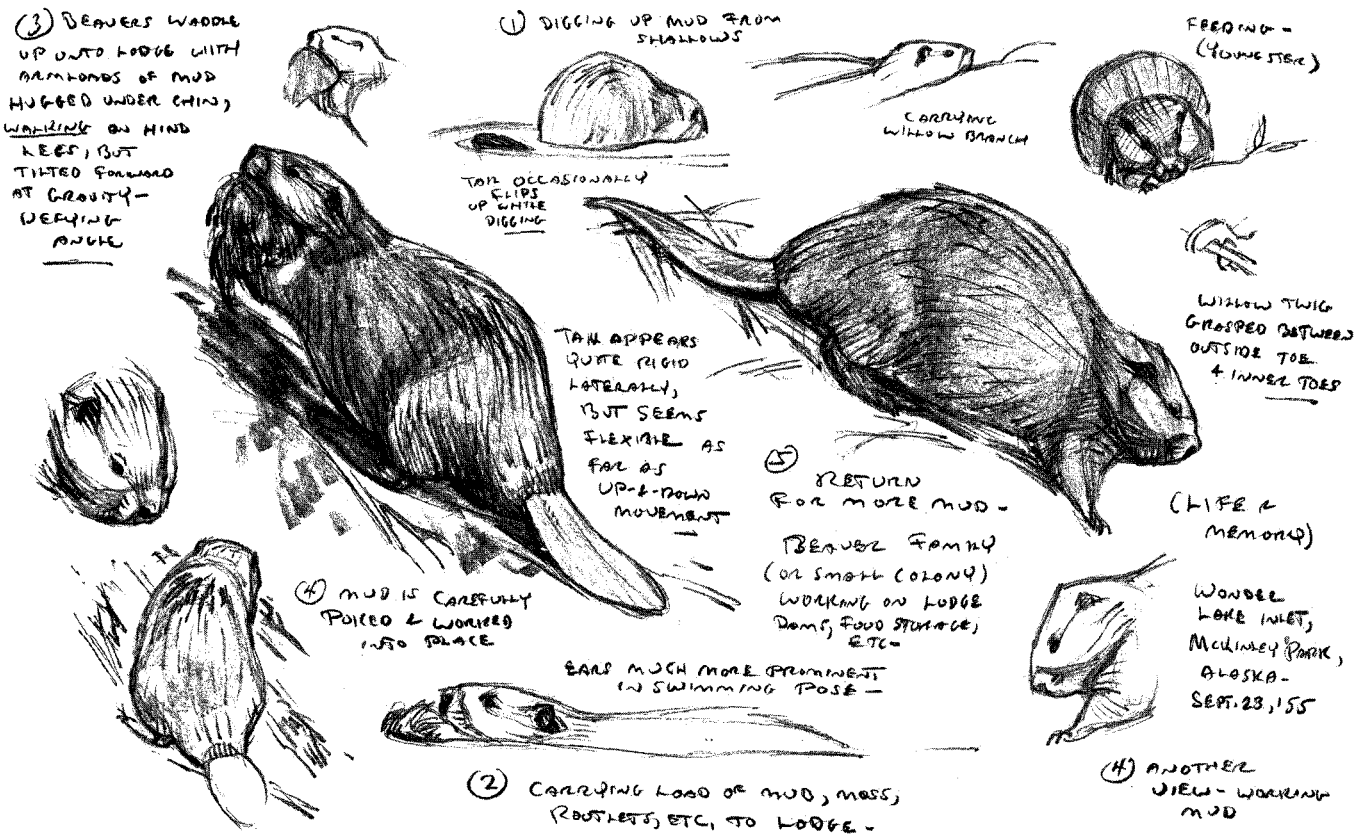

95-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK—
PTARMIGAN NOW FLOCKING TOGETHER—
VARYING DEGREES OF WHITENESS
OCT. 4, '55
HIGHWAY PASS, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—
OCT. 4, '55
(LIFE) ALARMED ROCK PTARMIGAN—
SNOWY WHITE—PINKISH REFL. ON UNDERSIDES—YELLOWISH TINGE TO FEET.
BLACK QUILLS TO PRIMARIES—
TAIL OF PTARMIGAN PLANING INTO WILLOWS
DEPRESSED IN CENTER—
(MEMORY)
MOST PTARMIGAN APPEARED WHITE—SOME WITH SCATTERED DARK FEATHERS ON SCAPULAR AREA, HEAD & NECK—
OCT. 8, '55 70-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—
ROCK & WILLOW PTARMIGAN IN BRUSH—
"FREEZE" POSE
(LIFE)
SAVAGE R. AREA, OCT. 11, '55
MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—
(LIFE & MEMORY)
ALARMED PTARMIGAN
ONE OF SMALL FLOCK IN WILLOWS—SNOW-FILLED STREAM BED—ANOTHER LANDED IN WILLOWS, WATCHED US—
SAVAGE RIVER
MCKINLEY PARK
ALASKA—OCT. 11, '55
(MEMORY)
IN SUNLIGHT, PTARMIGAN MAY APPEAR DEAD WHITE—FEATHERS HAVE SOMEWHAT LUMPY "QUILTED" APPEARANCE (POSSIBLY DUE TO INCOMPLETE WINTER FEATHERING)
OCT. 13, '55 IGLOO CANYON,
MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—
WALKING DOWN SLOPE—WEIGHT RESTED ON ENTIRE TARSUS OF EXTENDED FOOT & LEG—
(MEMORY)
SNOW BLUISH—
PTARMIGAN AT L SIDE OF FURROW CATCHING DIRECT SUNLIGHT—EQUALLY BRILLIANT WHITE—
(SKETCHED IN FROM LIFE)
SAVAGE R., MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA—
FLOCK OF PTARMIGAN NOW ENTIRELY WHITE—
OCT. 21, '56

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

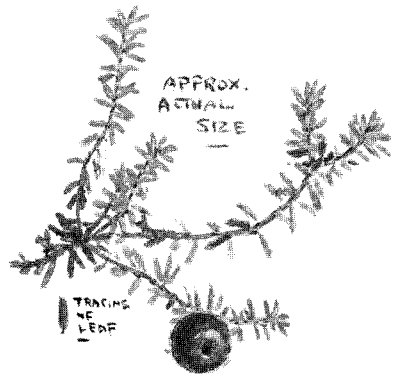

BLACKISH SKIN AROUND EYE & ON NOSE -
INSIDE OF EAR LIGHT (VISIBLE ONLY IN REAR VIEW)
SUSPICIOUS - SNIFFING
SEPT. 25 '55 WONDER LAKE INLET
(MEMORY)
WINTER'S COMING - HARVESTING WILLOWS POND E OF WONDER L. AREA - MCKINLEY PARK AUG. 21, 154
(LIFE & MEMORY) DETAILS OF HEAD - TAKEN FROM SWIMMING ANIMAL (SEE ABOVE)
BLUISH-GRAY TAIL DARK RUSTY-BROWN FUR BLACKISH BROWN NOSE
FLOATING BEAVER LOOKS FLAT ACROSS BACK -
SEPT. 20 - FEEDING POSES IN SHALLOWS - (COMP. FROM MEMORY)
GOLD WILLOWS
(MEMORY) CARRYING BRANCH UP OVER DAM ONTO NEXT LEVEL
WATER RUNNING OVER DAM - AUTUMN FOLIAGE WORKED INTO DAM
SITTING ON TAIL
TWO BEAVERS WORKING IN NEWLY-FLOODED AREA - SERIES OF SMALL DAMS IN HEAVY WILLOW GROWTH - INLET OF WONDER LAKE, MCKINLEY PARK. SEPT. 19, '55
TAIL ITCH (MEMORY)
PARENTS & 3 YOUNG - H BEAVER FEEDING AT ONCE IN SHALLOWS - ADD ON WILLOW CUTTINGS (COMP FROM MEMORY) SEPT. 20

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


(memory)
BEAVER WATCHING — FLOATING — HIND FEET VERTICAL —
POND N OF WONDER LAKE RANGER STA., MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA — AUG. 25, '56 — BEAVERS STARTING ON WINTER FOOD SUPPLY (1ST FROSTS)
APPARENT POSITION UNDER WATER —
CARRYING STICK UP ONTO LODGE — SMALL BEAVER
(memory)
BEAVER RESEMBLES OTTER & SEAL IN THAT BODY PROPER IS MODIFIED BY LAYER OF FAT; FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THICK FUR & FOLDS OF LOOSE SKIN — SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION IN PARTICULAR IS WELL BURIED — NOTE FOLD OF SKIN IN SHOULDER AREA, STRETCHING FROM FOREARM TO LOWER JAW —
OLD BEAVER DRAGGING A GOOD-SIZED BRANCH UP ONTO THE BASE OF THE LODGE — THIS WAS ABOUT AS BIG A WILLOW AS WAS AVAILABLE IN THE AREA —
WONDER LAKE INLET SEPT. 23, '55


(3) BEAVERS WADDLE UP ONTO LODGE WITH ARMLOADS OF MUD HUGGED UNDER CHIN; WALKING ON HIND LEGS, BUT TILTED FORWARD AT GROUTY-DIGGING ANGLE
(1) DIGGING UP MUD FROM SHALLOWS
TAIL OCCASIONALLY FLIPS UP WHILE DIGGING
CARRYING WILLOW BRANCH
FEEDING — (YOUNG STEM)
WILLOW TWIG GRASPED BETWEEN OUTSIDE TOE & INNER TOES
TAIL APPEARS QUITE RIGID LATERALLY, BUT SEEMS FLEXIBLE AS FAR AS UP-&-DOWN MOVEMENT
(5) RETURN FOR MORE MUD — BEAVER FAMILY (OR SMALL COLONY) WORKING ON LODGE DAMS, FOOD STORAGE, ETC —
(LIFE & MEMORY)
WONDER LAKE INLET, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA — SEPT. 23, '55
(4) MUD IS CAREFULLY POISED & WORKED INTO PLACE
EARS MUCH MORE PROMINENT IN SWIMMING POSE —
(2) CARRYING LOAD OF MUD, MOSS, ROOTLETS, ETC, TO LODGE —
(4) ANOTHER VIEW — WORKING MUD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



YOUNG GRIZZLY FEEDING ON BUFFALO BERRY
ON TOKLAT RIVER BAR. VERY EVENLY-COLORED,
BROWN - SLEEK COAT, BLOWING IN WIND -
(LIFE & MEMORY)

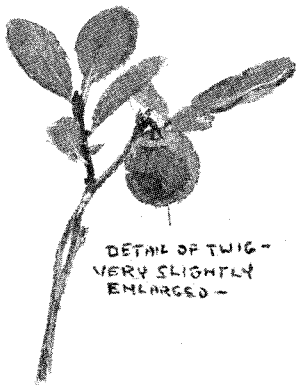
MCKINLEY PARK,
ALASKA -
SEPT 8, '56

(MEMORY)

GOT ITCH & SAT DOWN, EXTENDING
FOOT — APPEARED TO FORGET WHAT IT
WAS ABOUT TO DO FOR A MOMENT, THEN
SCRATCHED INDUSTRIOUSLY. FINALLY
FELL OVER BACKWARDS FROM EFFORT,
& LAY THERE IDLY SCRATCHING
STOMACH FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE
RESUMING FEEDING -

(LIFE & MEMORY)

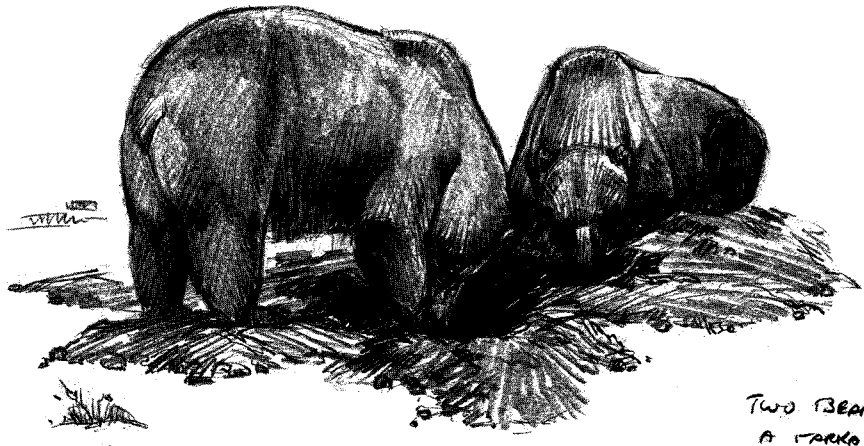
LARGE, VERY
DARK GRIZZLY
ON BENCH JUST
ABOVE MCKINLEY
BAR, JUST W OF
CAMP EIELSON -



DETAIL OF TWIG -
VERY SLIGHTLY
ENLARGED -

FEMALE & WELL-GROWN CUB FORAGING -
MORE OR LESS INDEPENDENTLY - OVER PARTLY
SNOW-COVERED SLOPES - 2 MAGPIES & FOX WERE
INTERESTED HANGERS-ON -

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



(1) MAMA EXCAVATING WHILE JUNIOR RESTS UP — THE TWO BEARS SOMETIMES WORKED TOGETHER, BUT USUALLY MAMA STOOD BY WHILE JUNIOR DUG, OR JUNIOR SAT WATCHING OR LAY DOWN & SLEPT WHILE MAMA WORKED — JUNIOR BAWLED IRRITABLY WHENEVER HE HAD TO MOVE.

TWO BEARS AFTER A PARKA SQUIRREL — SPENT ABOUT 1½ HOURS EXCAVATING A SNACK —

OCT. 5, '55
SABLE PASS
MCKINLEY PARK
ALASKA —

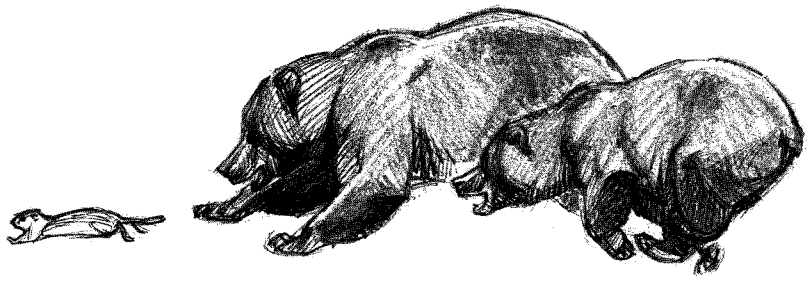
BOUNCING ON FOREFEET — STIFF-LEGGED (BREAKING FROZEN GROUND?)

BITING AT FROZEN CRUST

REACHING INTO HOLE

MAMA GOES TO WORK ON A GROUND SQUIRREL

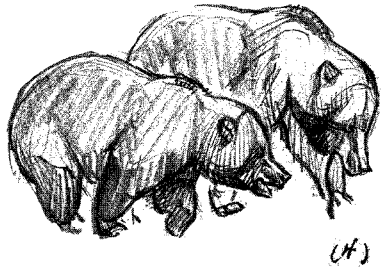
JUNIOR DOING HIS PART — (LIFE & MEMORY)



(2) THE CHASE — SQUIRREL SUDDENLY LEAPT OUT OF EXCAVATION & DASHED AWAY.

MAMA SCRATCHING HER BACK

(3) THE FINISH — MAMA ROARING, JUNIOR BAWLING, THE SQUIRREL SCREECHING

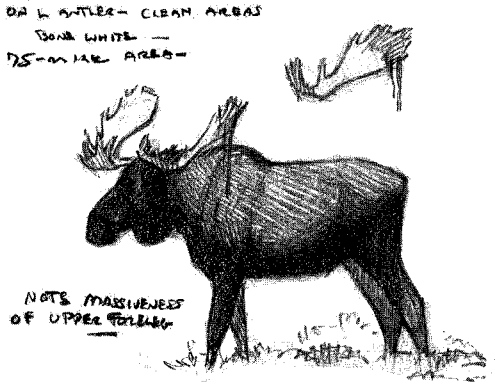


(4)

MAMA WINS, BY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED POUNDS — SHE TOOK HER SQUIRREL & ATE IT WHILE JUNIOR BAWLED — THEN THE SEDO WENT SEPARATE WAYS.

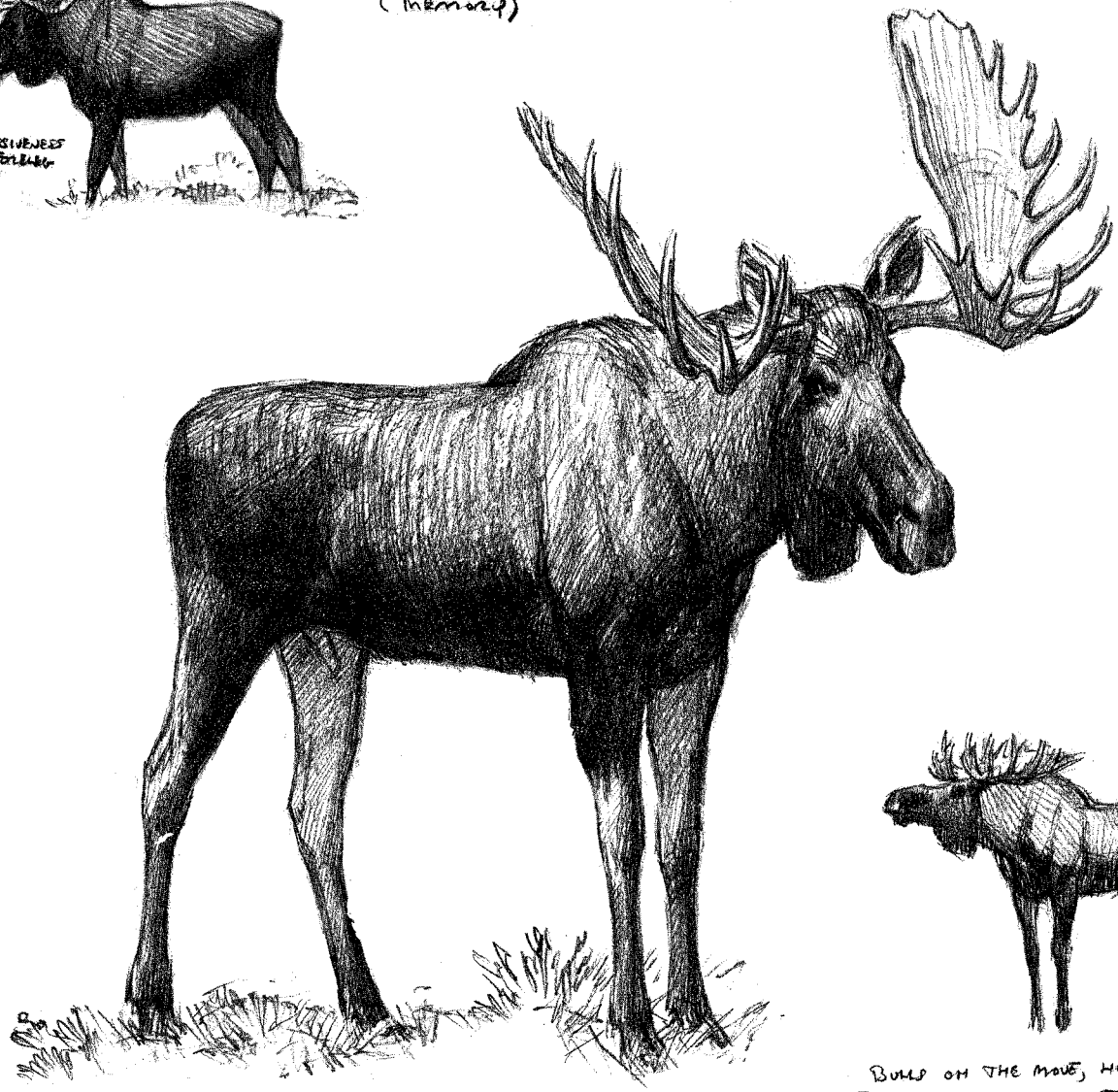
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(BELOW) BULL SHEDDING VELVET — RAGGED BROWN STAINS ON L ANTLER — CLEAN AREAS BONE WHITE — 25-MILE AREA —

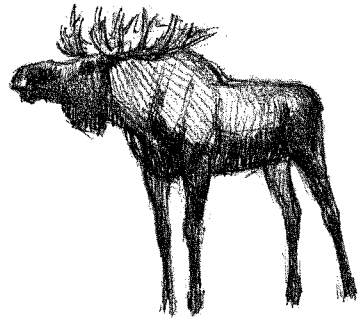


NOTE MASSIVENESS OF UPPER FOREHEAD

TWO BULLS & COW BROWSING IN DRAW JUST ABOVE THOROFARE BAR, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA — AS WE APPROACHED, THEY RETREATED DOWN & AROUND SLOPE, THE COW IN THE LEAD — BULL WITH LARGEST ANTLERS (L) HAD FLAP-SHAPED DEWLAP, NO BELL — SMALLER BULL HAD BELL AND FLAP — SEPT. 4, '56 (MEMORY)

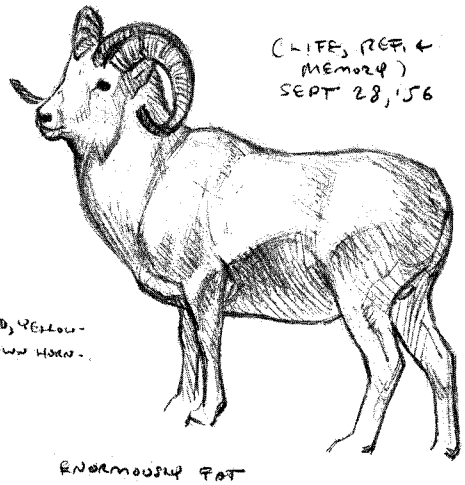


A BIG BULL WELL INTO THE RUT — HIS STOMACH DROWN UP, AND MUCH SURPLUS FAT USED UP BY NOW; HE LOOKS "BEEFY" APPEARANCE OF "PRIME" BULL AT BEGINNING OF SEASON; AND HAS ACQUIRED A SOLID, LONG-BODIED, LEAN LOOK — (FROM SEPT. 27 - 29 OBSERVATIONS, MCKINLEY PARK - DENERI L. AREA)



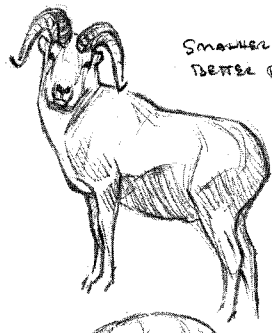
BULLS ON THE MOVE, HUNTING FOR COWS; TEND TO STRIKE "NOBLE" POSES — HEAD LOW AS ANIMAL TRAVELS, GRUNTING AT INTERVALS; DURING PAUSES, HE MAY RAISE MUZZLE HIGH, TRYING TO CATCH SCENT — ALSO, MAY POSE ALMOST IN MID-STRIDE — TO LOOK, LISTEN & SNIFF —

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

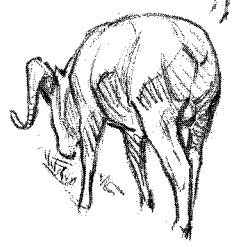


(LIFE, REF. & MEMORY)
SEPT 28, '56

GRAYED, YELLOW-BROWN HORN.



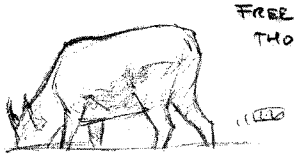
SMALLER RAM - BETTER PROPORTIONS



ENORMOUSLY FAT OLD RAM - AFTER LOOKING AT SUMMER RAMS (AUG 15 SKETCHES), THIS ONE WAS IMMEDIATELY REMINISCENT OF FAIR-TIME HEREFORD - BARREL-BODIED, SHORT-LEGGED LOOK -

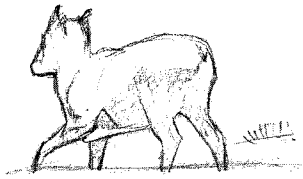
3 RAMS FEEDING ON RELATIVELY SNOW-FREE SLOPES ABOVE ROAD, W OF CAMP EIELSON I THOROFARE PASS, MCKINLEY PARK -

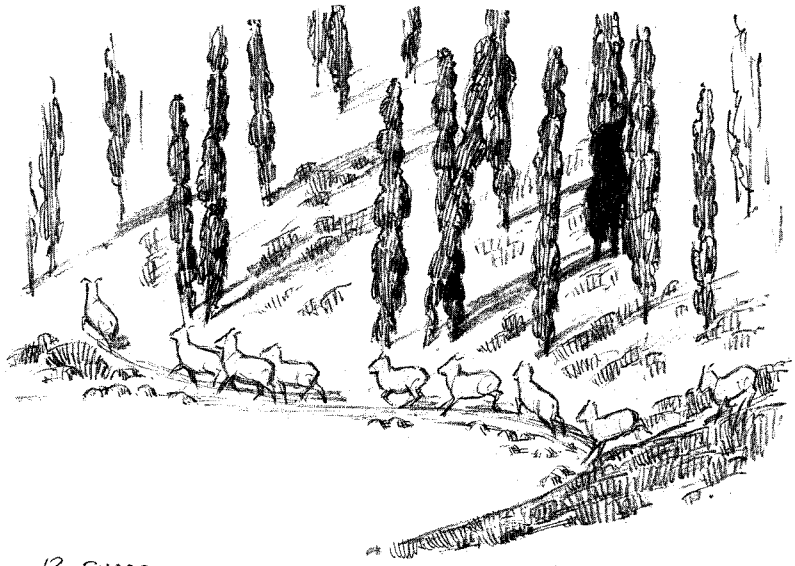
FEEDING



SHEEP SCRAPING AWAY SNOW TO FEED - (LOOSE, POWDERY SNOW) -

OCT. 9, '55





12 SHEEP MIGRATING TO WINTER RANGE - BAND OF EWES & LAMBS, LED BY AN OLD EWE, TRAVELLING IN ACROSS RIDGE W OF SANCTUARY RIVER - HEADED FOR HIGH COUNTRY TO THE NORTH -

(ABOVE) SKIRTING A SMALL FROZEN, SNOW-COVERED LAKE

SNOW-COVERED SLOPES UNDER OPEN SPRUCE WOODS

SHEEP HURRIED THROUGH WOODS IN SADDLE - SHOWED DOWN AS THEY REACHED TOP OF RIDGE

WARM LIGHT - BROWNISH-ORANGE WILLOWS, WARM GREEN SPRUCE - BLUE SHADOWS

(MEMORY - SETTING FROM LOCALE)

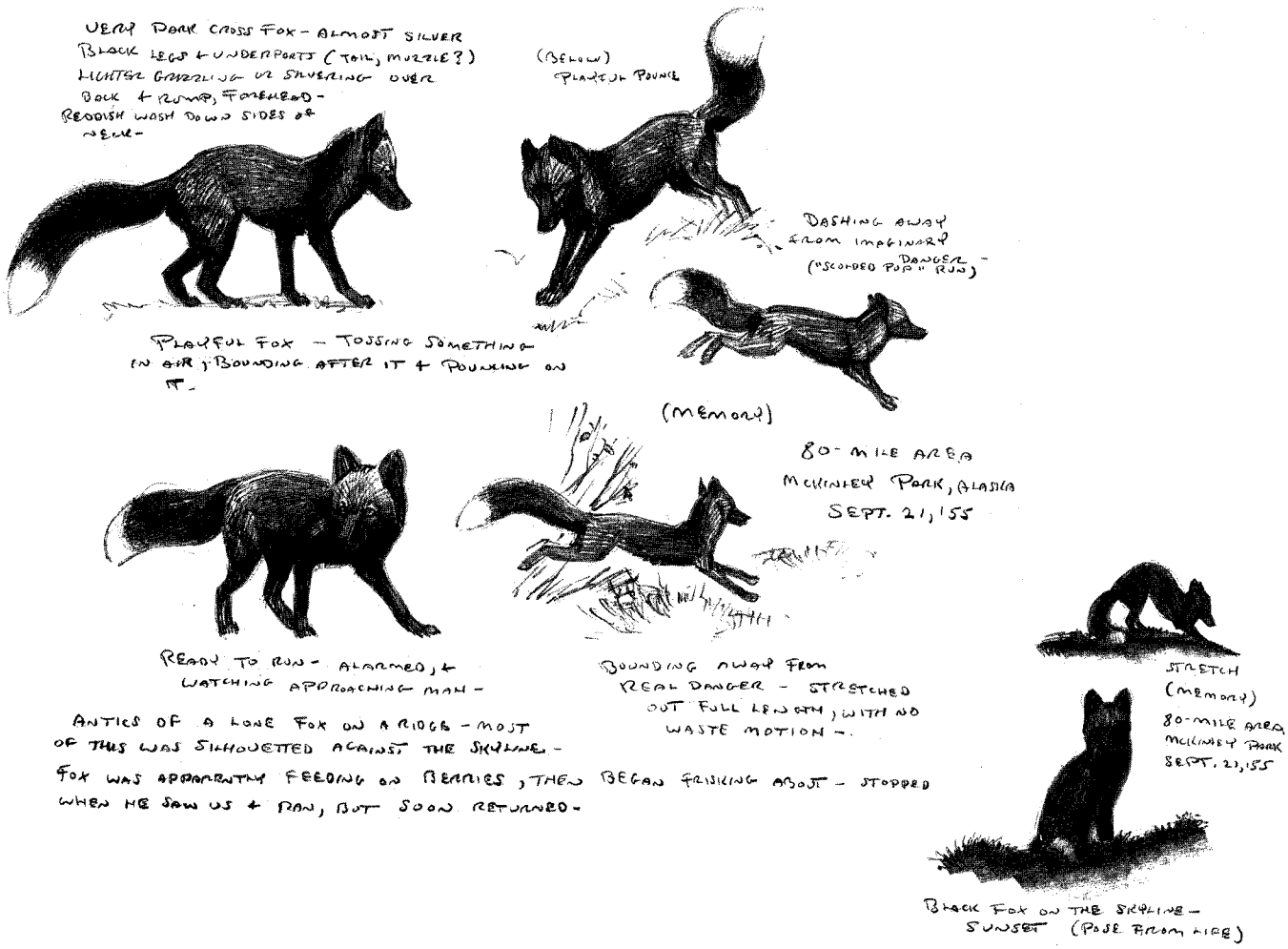
SANCTUARY RIVER AREA, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA - OCT. 12, '55

CLIMBING UP THROUGH ALDER & WILLOW -

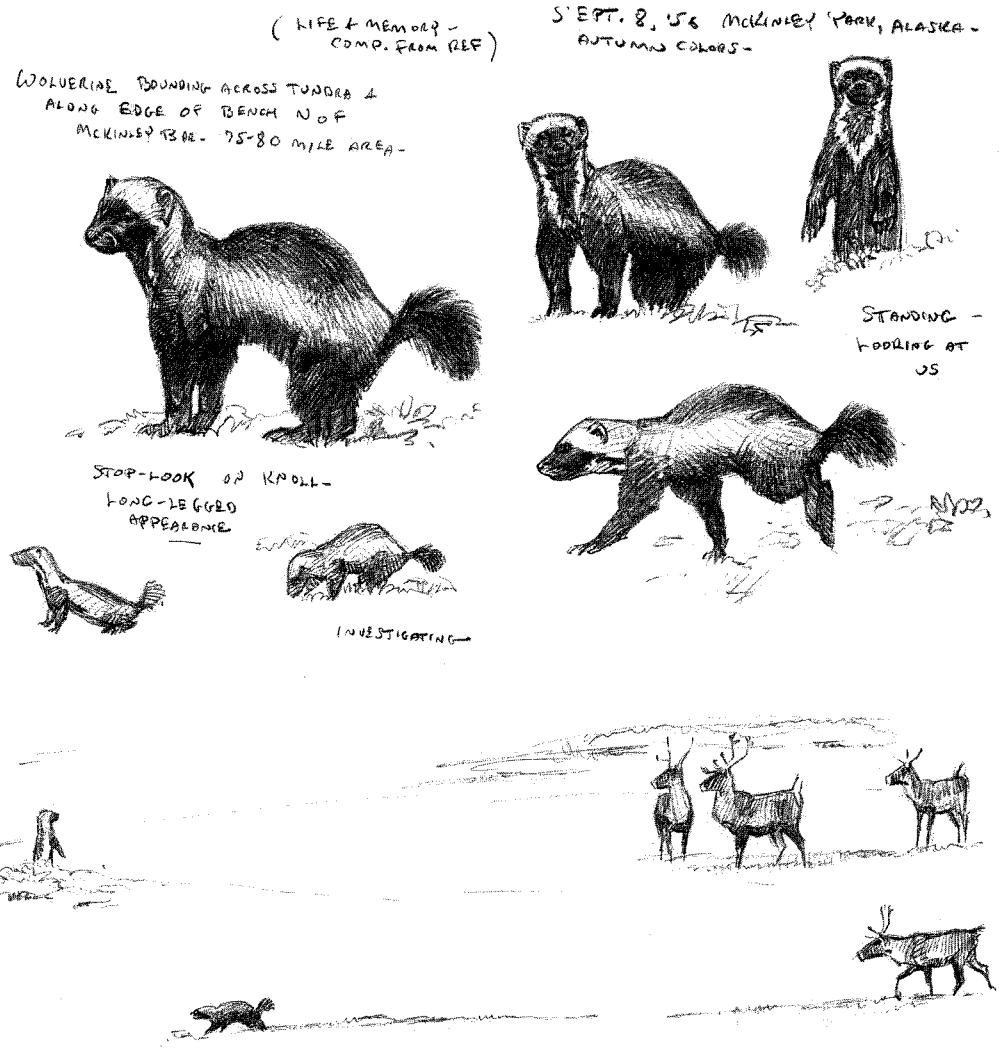
SHEEP WARM YELLOW AGAINST SNOW - PURPLISH ON SHADOW SIDE - CAST SHADOW ON SNOW DEEP BLUE - YELLOWISH HORNS -

(NOTES & MEMORY)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


VERY DARK CROSS FOX - ALMOST SILVER BLACK LEGS & UNDERPARTS (TAIL, MUZZLE?) LIGHTER GRIZZLING OR SILVERING OVER BACK & RUMP, FOREHEAD - REDDISH WASH DOWN SIDES OF NECK -
(BELOW) PLAYFUL POUNCE
DASHING AWAY FROM IMAGINARY DANGER - ("SCORNED PUP" RUN)
PLAYFUL FOX - TOSSING SOMETHING IN AIR; BOUNDING AFTER IT & POUNCING ON IT -
(MEMORY)
80-MILE AREA MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA SEPT. 21, '55
READY TO RUN - ALARMED, & WATCHING APPROACHING MAN -
BOUNDING AWAY FROM REAL DANGER - STRETCHED OUT FULL LENGTH, WITH NO WASTE MOTION -
STRETCH (MEMORY) 80-MILE AREA MCKINLEY PARK SEPT. 21, '55
ANTICS OF A LONE FOX ON A RIDGE - MOST OF THIS WAS SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SKYLINE - FOX WAS APPARENTLY FEEDING ON BERRIES, THEN BEGAN FRISKING ABOUT - STOPPED WHEN HE SAW US & RAN, BUT SOON RETURNED -
BLACK FOX ON THE SKYLINE - SUNSET (POSE FROM LIFE)
WINTER COAT FILLING OUT - LIGHT-COLORED RED FOX - DARKER ON HINDQUARTERS; BUSHY TAIL - (MEMORY) OCT. 11, '55 MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA
FOX TROTTED ALONG STREAMBED, SABLE PASS, STOPPING WHENEVER HE CAME TO A GOOD HUNTING-GROUND - APP. HUNTED BY EAR -
(1) TROTTING ALONG WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO -
(2) MAKE A NOISE UNDER THE SNOW - MICE!
HEAD TIPPED TOWARD SOUND
(3) READY - THERE IT GOES AGAIN -
(4) POUNCE!
(5) DOWN INTO THE SNOW - GET HIM! WHERE'D HE GO?
(6) WOULD HAVE BEEN SOUR ANYWAY - WASTED NO TIME IN AREA IF UNSUCCESSFUL -

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

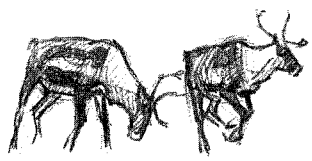

(LIFE & MEMORY - COMP. FROM REF)
SEPT. 8, '56 MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA - AUTUMN COLORS -
WOLVERINE BOUNDING ACROSS TUNDRA & ALONG EDGE OF BENCH N OF MCKINLEY BAR - 75-80 MILE AREA -
STANDING - LOOKING AT US
STOP-LOOK ON KNOLL - LONG-LEGGED APPEARANCE
INVESTIGATING
THE CURIOUS CARIBOU — LONE CARIBOU, NOTING PASSING WOLVERINE, TROTTED ALONG AFTER IT AS IF TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT — LATER, WOLVERINE APPROACHED 3 CARIBOU (TOP) WHO RAN, TAILS UP, THEN TURNED & WATCHED. WOLVERINE STOOD A MOMENT, THEN RAN OFF; 3 CARIBOU FOLLOWED A SHORT DISTANCE -
(MEMORY & REF.)
FOLLOWING TRAIL - APP. LEFT BY CARIBOU - FOR SOME DISTANCE - APP. FOR EASY TRAVEL
POUNCE - APP. ON MOUSE
LOOKING
SLIDING DOWN STEEP SNOW-SLOPE
LARGE, HEAVY-BODIED WOLVERINE. ON SLOPES BELOW ROAD JUST W OF CAMP EIELSON, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA - SEPT. 23, '56
THIS WOLVERINE, TRAVELLING OVER SOFT SNOW, LACKED ARCHED APPEARANCE - LIKE SQUATTY BEAR, RATHER THAN WEASEL
SHARP UP-TILTED NOSE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

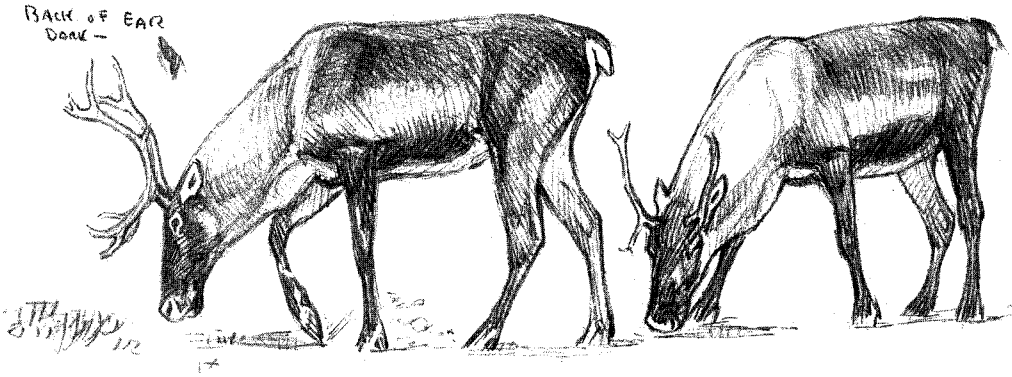
PART OF BAND OF 30 CARIBOU RESTING ON OPEN KNOLL E OF WONDER LAKE, MCKINLEY PARK - (MEMORY & SEPT. 20 SKETCH) SEPT 20, 156 SNOWY - SNOW ON TUNDRA -

(R) ANIMALS STAND NO INTRUSION ON AREAS THEY HAVE JUST CLEARED - AN UPWARD SWING OF THE HEAD SENDS MOOCHERS ON THEIR WAY

CARIBOU FORAGING IN SNOW - CLEAR SNOW AWAY WITH VIGOROUS PAWING -



BACK OF EAR DARK -

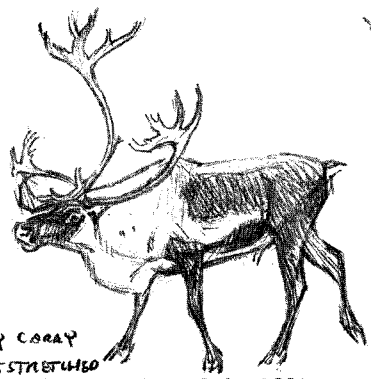


NOTE LIGHT AREA ON HIND LEG OF COW AT L) SECONDARY HORIZONTAL LIGHT STRIPE ON COW AT R -

(LIFE & MEMORY)

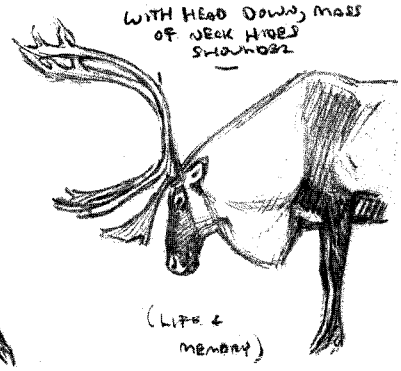
RESTING BULL - SUSPICIOUS

BULLS FREQUENTLY CARRY HEAD TILTED & OUTSTRETCHED



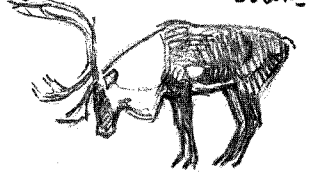
SCARRED EFFECT ON SIDES OF NECK -

WITH HEAD DOWN, MASS OF NECK HIDES SHOULDER



(LIFE & MEMORY)

BULLS OFTEN STAND WITH FEET WELL UNDER, HEAD DOWN -

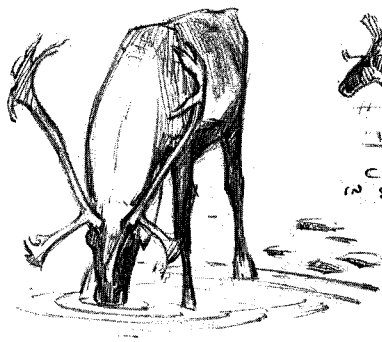


HERD OF APPROX. 200 CARIBOU NEAR N END OF MCKINLEY BAR CABIN TRAIL, WONDER L AREA - MOST ANIMALS FEEDING & RESTING - BULLS DISTRUSTFUL, OCCASIONALLY BELLIGERENT -

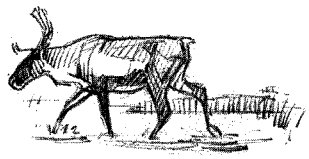
(LIFE) SLEEPING WARRIOR - ONE BULL LAID ANTLERS OVER ON SIDE.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

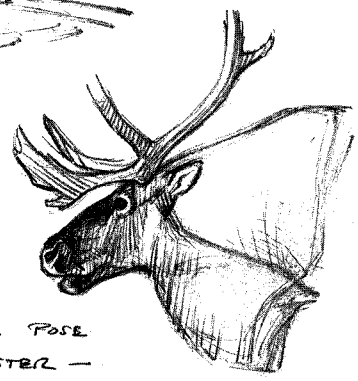
AGGRESSIVE BULLS LEAN, NERVOUS- KEPT SEVERAL OTHERS, APP. ♀, ON OUTSKIRTS OF BAND — WOULD DRIVE VICIOUSLY WITH ANTLERS — (STARTED TOWARD ME)



DRINKING FROM TUNDRA POND (NOW VERY LOW— EXPOSED MUD & ROCK BORDER)



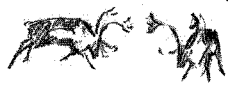
COW SPLASHING ALONG IN SHALLOWS— APP. FEEDING ON MARSH GRASS—



CHARACTERISTIC POSE OF HAREM-MASTER — HEAD LOW, PANTING

(MEMORY & REF—)

FIGHTERS FREQUENTLY PIVOT — KICKING SNOW IN ALL DIRECTIONS

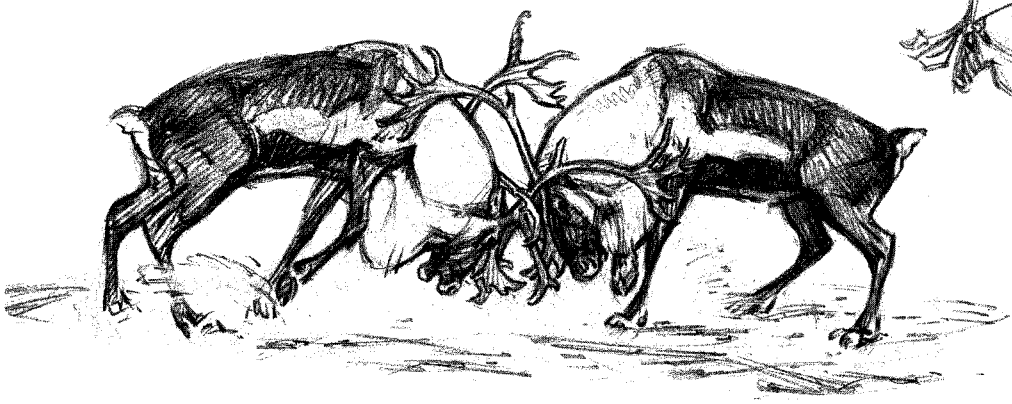


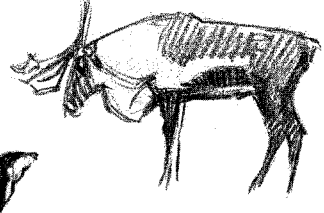
FIGHT BEGINS AS PURSUED BULL SUDDENLY STOPS & SWINGS AROUND —

CRACK!

CLATTER!

IN HARD FIGHT, HINDQUARTERS & HEAD LOW —





BULLS HAVE ALL WEIGHT IN SHOULDERS & NECK— LEAN, LEGGY APPEARANCE

RUTTING ACTIVITY IN HERD CONTAINING 7 OR 8 MATURE BULLS —

BULLS WALKED OR TROTTED NERVOUSLY ABOUT, USUALLY AVOIDING ONE ANOTHER— OCCASIONAL BATTLES AS ONE WOULD WORK HIMSELF UP TO BELLIGERENT RUSH & OVERTAKE ANOTHER —

75-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA — SEPT. 24, '56

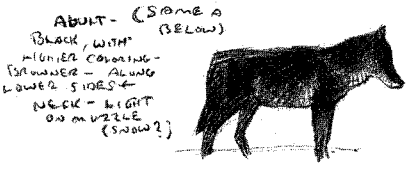
(MEMORY)

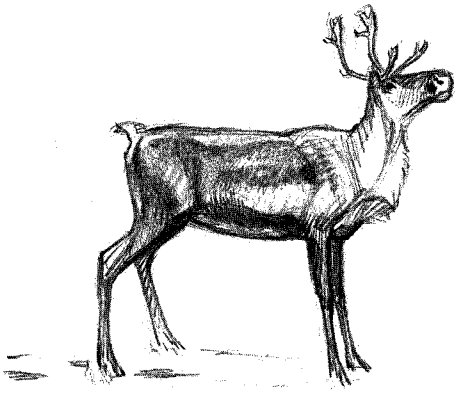
LUNGE —

ROUT — RETREATING BULL APPEARED TO LIMP SLIGHTLY AFTER THIS —

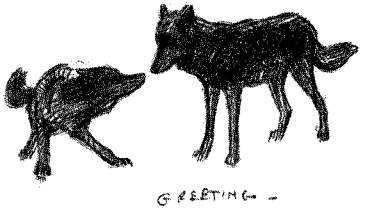
NO NONSENSE FROM ANY OF YOU COWS, (VICTOR) EITHER —

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

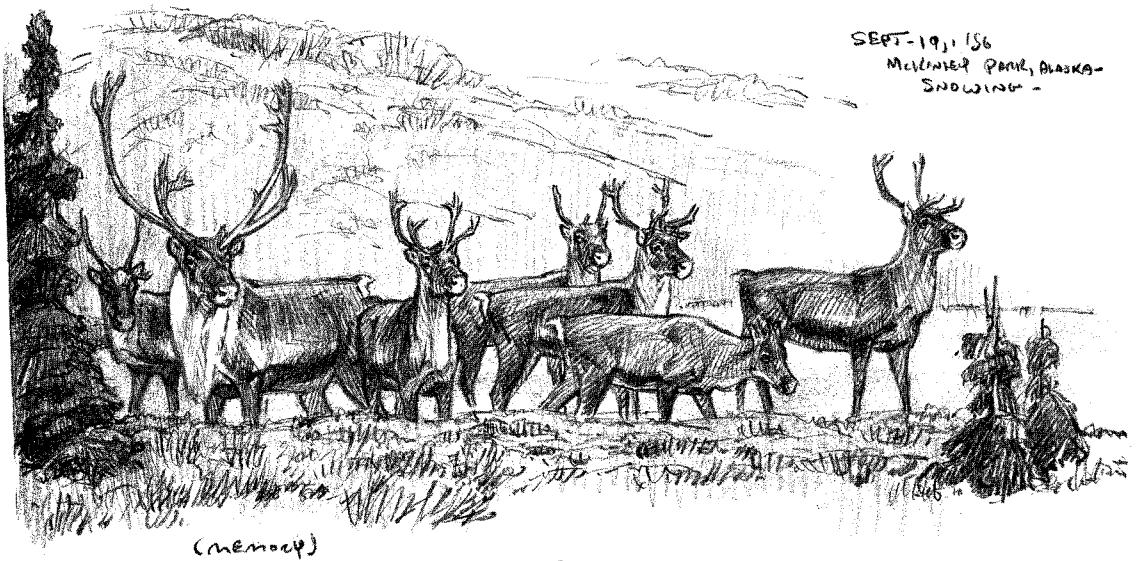




ALERTED - TESTING
THE WIND -



GREETING -

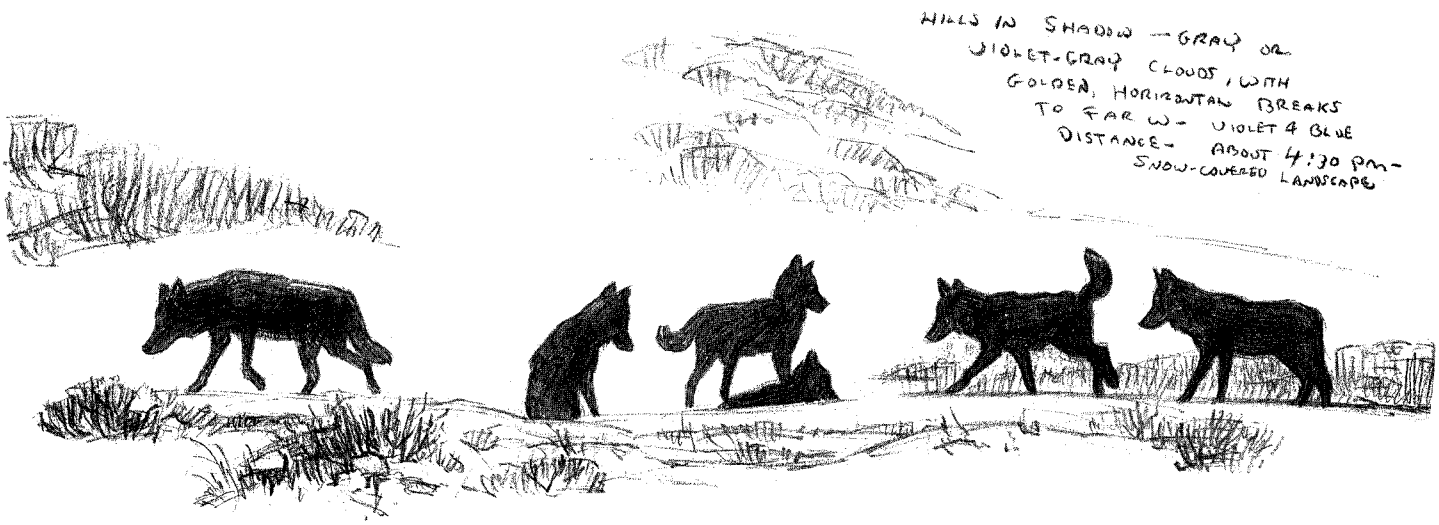


SEPT-19, '56
MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA -
SNOWING -

(MEMORY)

PART OF BAND OF 12 CARIBOU NEAR S TIP OF WONDER LAKE — WATCHING LIZ, TO R — BAND WAS BUNCHED, CIRCLING AWAY & THEN BACK TOWARD LIZ, APPARENTLY WANTING TO GO PAST HER — AT THIS TIME THE COW AT FAR R APPEARED TO BE LEADING THE GROUP - SHE WAS A NONDESCRIPT INDIVIDUAL, WITH A GRAY NECK, & WAS FOLLOWED BY A UNIFORMLY-COLORED CALF. LATER, THE SMALLER OF THE TWO BIG BULLS IN THE GROUP WAS NOTED AT THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTING BAND — THE BIGGEST BULL BROUGHT UP THE REAR.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


HILLS IN SHADOW — GRAY OR
VIOLET-GRAY CLOUDS, WITH
GOLDEN, HORIZONTAL BREAKS
TO FAR W — VIOLET & BLUE
DISTANCE — ABOUT 4:30 PM —
SNOW-COVERED LANDSCAPE

(1) PACK OF 9 BLACK WOLVES — APPEARED TO BE 2 ADULTS, 7 YOUNG — (MEMORY & NOTE)
8 ANIMALS RESTING & PLAYING IN GROUP BESIDE ROAD —
PIECES OF SHEET ICE HAD BEEN BROKEN FROM
NEARBY BEAVER POND & PULLED OUT
ONTO ROAD —

(2) 2ND ADULT TROTTED DOWN ROAD FROM
W — APPEARED TO BE MALE —
ADULT (♀?) FROM GROUP BY ROAD
TROTTED OUT & JOINED HIM, & THEY
LED THE PACK N, UP OVER RIDGES —

70-MILE AREA, MCKINLEY PARK,
ALASKA — SEPT 23, '56

(3) LAST YOUNGSTER TO
DISAPPEAR OVER HILL SAT
BRIEFLY & LOOKED BACK —

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DABNEY STUART

THE SHORT PUMP BLUES

Oh well, let them keep their temperate horizons
Where no smirched pedigree roosts, where consonant lifetimes
Thicken, an indelible obscurity Mr. Dwindle waters
And trims, *not to make grow necessarily, but to have*
Something to *tend*.
For some the predictable rack
Begins at evening, for others at an hour like 3 A.M.,
Modern, worthy of titles, susceptible to the nerves' rainbow.

Black, said Redon, *is the most essential of all colors.*
Nothing can debauch it. It is an agent of the spirit
Far more than the fine color of the palette or the prism.

Further, it is irreducible, and cannot be broken.
Certain fathoms
In th'earth, and deeper than did ever plummet sound.

Refrain

How puny desire is, said the Elephant, and the Eggplant concurred.
The smoke from my cigarette thrills the porch screen, two blocks away
Allied and Southern Refrigerated keep the highway from curling up,
Thin details people die from every day, every porous day,
The screen of the lungs, the springing asphalt, the humdrum miles
Of exchange, this for that, my life upon her faith,
My ducats! My daughter! the act of possession
Is always more important than the thing possessed.
How puny desire is, said the Elephant again, to which Adam,
The begetter of erections:
This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.

Phooey.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Refrain

A tempest in a teapot, said the Marquis de L'Ament. Wrong,
Said the Chipping Sparrow, This ain't no teapot.

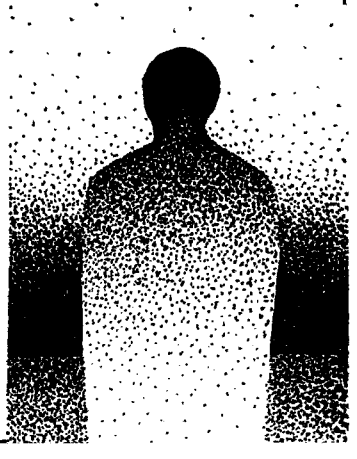
And you know what, folks? He was right. Nevertheless,
Something's brewing.

> The crocodile just doesn't care
> Where he keeps his underwear.
> He puts them in his bottom drawer
> Or underneath the candy store
> And then goes out and buys some more.
> He wears a red sock on his nose
> And warms the cheese between his toes
> So that it daily grows and grows:
> When he's hungry late at night
> He reaches down and takes a bite.
> Now you know the croc's delight:
> He keeps his treasures out of sight.

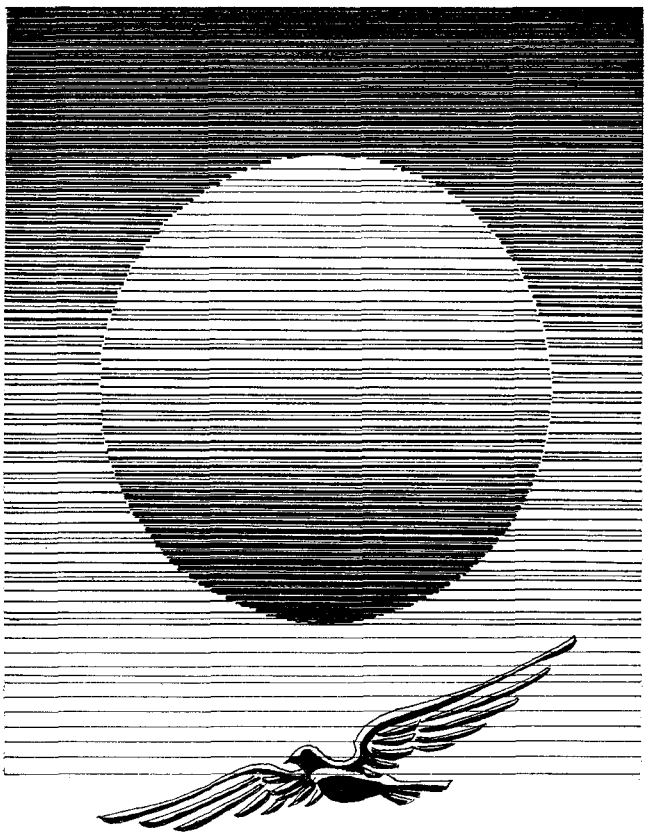
Vanished, in fact, into air, into thin air, rumored to be
A man-eating reptile found in your normal swamp everywhere.
And how *do* you like this quicksand? courtesy
Your local unemployed ark-maker, with time on his hands,
Through his fingers, his cup runneth over, yea, verily,
We're all in the same sink and the sources are drying up.

Refractory people of the world, it's time to join hands and

Refrain.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THEOREM BASED ON TUESDAY'S SEARCH

ERIC CHAET

Mail slows down at the border of the Navajo Nation. I'd taken a day's sick-leave 2½ weeks ago, hitched into Gallup, & had my eyes dilated & examined for specs. I was still walking in a blur, waiting, while the eyeglasses made their way to me.

Lost one pair, apparently, walking from woman to highway ramp in Kansas. Another pair at the main post office in Reno, Nevada—where I sent a buddy in Missouri a picture postcard, of a miner panning gold. & the last pair, in an L.A. airport, 10 months previous.

Now I had a job & paycheck, but still no glasses. Teaching math at a high school run by Indians & their non-Indian employees, under contract to fulfill certain absurd & aggressive requirements, to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, USA, 1976.

Tuesday was my easiest day. Only 2 classes. Square roots, equal to, greater than, less than, & adolescents in various states of being spaced out, arrogant, shy, dreamy. . . . This Tuesday, I'd been appointed sponsor of the student council, by the principal. A low blow.

Then there was a teacher's meeting. At which the business teacher stirred up a scene.

She'd been hired a couple of weeks after me, even—just as classes were about to begin. There were no apartments nor BIA ranchhouses left by then. So she had been living in one of the "isolation" rooms in the dorm, ordinarily for the use of students sick with communicable diseases. It was a rare day when a dozen students or adults I knew weren't sick. Then, a trailer was assigned to her. There was a difficulty. The trailer was occupied by a young Navajo woman—the middle school secretary—& her boy friend. After about a week, the young woman left, but speaking bitterly to the face of the other woman—the business teacher. This was the business teacher's story. Then for a week the business teacher was cheerful at school. No, she said, she hadn't moved into her trailer yet. She was cleaning it up. It smelled bad, she said. She had already moved almost all her belongings into it.

Then there was a fire, at midnight. The fire truck came, but it ran over its own hose. Most of the men on the compound were there, excited, one even whooping with glee. They ran here & there with hoses, squirting little & big jets of water into the huge flame—which was consuming the business teacher's trailer.

Now she was complaining to us at the high school faculty meeting that she was still in the high school dorm, in a filthy room, with no prospect of new quarters, & she was afraid to go to sleep—she smelled gas.

"Nobody cares what happens to me," she concluded.

I looked at her. A big bulky creature she was, lame, & given to flab & warts. She was rapidly becoming an old woman. Did I care what happened to her? No, I didn't. Perhaps she was right, then.

She looked around the room, from one to another. When she came to my face, she stopped & raised her eye-brows expectantly. But I had nothing to express.

She fled in tears.

Then the student-teacher from Massachusetts asked, with restrained anger & contempt, why didn't we *do* something about Plant Management?

Plant Management was 4 Navajos who spoke little English, & knew little mechanics, & who were equipped with few tools, & who needed permission from the BIA Gallup office, via the Chinle office, to eat breakfast or fart between 8 & 5—let alone fix things. These guys worked in a dim-lit garage near the elementary cafeteria.

Often 3 or even all 4 of them would drive into Gallup for a wrench or bolt. At such times they never returned before 5 PM, so the rumor had it—& then rarely sober.

Though, come to think of it, I wonder how the faculty came to know such things? Who had what source of information?

The student teacher, who had short red hair, a mustache, & a military bearing, spoke up. He was going to show me some karate, he'd said yesterday. He'd recently divorced a wife back east, & once gave me an enthusiastic summary of the history of modern psychiatry, culminating, triumphantly, with transactional analysis.

"Plant Management should have fixed the heater that burned up Beulah's trailer," he said. "She might have been in it. Plant Management was supposed to've hooked up the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new trailer for music & social studies. & what has Plant Management been doing? Nothing. & what are we doing about Plant Management? Nothing."

"If you know what to do about it," I said, "do it."

There was no time for a siesta that afternoon. I hurried home & fried up some potatoes & eggs, took a bath, put on a different shirt, & walked down the street to try to line up at least a talk & walk with one of the unattached pretty young teachers. Call her Ms. A. But when I knocked, Ms. B. let me in. I'd tried to strike up some sparks with her, but she was slow to flame—& here I was shifting my attack to Ms. A. I was ill at ease. I spied 2 kittens & began stroking them.

I spoke to Ms. A. "I was goin' fer a walk, & lookin' fer a recruit."

Ms. A. said, "I have a girls' club meeting at 7."

I had no idea what time it was.

"I'll git outa here," I said.

They both laughed. I laughed at it later, myself. But they quickly stopped laughing, & gaped. And I, walking, quickly stopped, & gaped. And I, walking, quickly stopped, & realizing I was laughing alone, walking into winter without a woman. Sobering myself. There were no eligible women I wanted in the compound. The young women were calling themselves girls & meeting in a club.

The ½ moon looked like a smear above the newly paved highway. I couldn't see as far ahead as the Lukachukai Mountains.

Back to the house. Settled with cigar & book, when the principal came by to recruit me. A search: a boy, 6, had missed the 3 PM bus, hung around the compound til 5, then set out on foot, the 7 miles or so, for home? around the length of the mesa.

2 THE SEARCH

I rubbed my eyes & put on another shirt, my shoes, my coat & hat, & went out to Eddie's truck.

"Do you have a flashlight?" he asked, thru the window of the cab.

"I don't. Maybe Frank does."

Frank's my roommate. He's vice principal of the high school. Tall, white-haired, dignified, vigorous. Usually in charge at the high school while Eddie flies around the country talking with lawyers, legislators, & Indian organizations.

"There might be one." He'd sent most of his stuff west with his wife, who had gone with the kids to live on the coast—away from a horrible allergic reaction to dust. "If it's here, it's in the truck. I'll get the keys."

"He's getting the keys, Eddie," I said.

But Frank's wife had written him, & he had received the letter yesterday, saying he should telephone her at 9 PM, Tuesday: ½ hour from now. So, strictly speaking, his mind was not on the keys, the flashlight, or the lost boy.

We 3 got into the truck & rode down the street. We stopped in front of the house of the husband & wife, respectively high school social studies teacher & 4th grade teacher. "Frank," Eddie said. "Run in & see if they have a flashlight."

Frank went, & returned, saying, "They don't have a flashlight. But they're coming with their truck."

"Okay," Eddie said. "Frank, you stay behind & go with them. We'll wait where the cattleguard is." He pouted a little, & jerked his head to the right, pointing with his lips.

"Right or left side of the road, Eddie?" Frank asked.

"Right," I said, hoping to speed things up. "The last right this side of Ice Cream Cone Hill."

"Okay."

We took off. On either side of the road, a few electric lights burned like dots on a scope, against the long hulking horizontal of the mesa. ½ a mile from the compound, Frank stopped by the cattleguard & we waited.

We waited a long time, it seemed. Eddie told me of 3 boys who had been lost running off from a boarding school in New Mexico—one of whom froze to death.

The brighter stars of the constellations showed through the moonlight. There were no clouds.

Finally, a vehicle approached. Eddie started up the motor, & we went forward, followed by the second vehicle. Eddie had time to tell me about the time he had run away from boarding school in New Mexico, himself, & hitched home. He was in the 6th grade then. & then, the car that was following us turned off on the other fork of a joint we'd just passed.

"That must not be them," I said.

"Looked liked a 4-wheel drive," Eddie said.

"Do they have 4-wheel drive?" I asked.

"No."

We turned around & waited another 5 minutes by the cattleguard. Then another vehicle showed up, & followed us.

We drove. Brush, stones, bones, gnarly pinions stood against the bare earth unmercifully exposed by high beams.

After 5 minutes or so, we stopped & got out of our vehicles.

"I forgot where you said to turn," Frank said.

The husband, Thomas Brady, said, "We found John Nelson about to go out with another bunch. But they didn't know where to go or what to do with themselves, either, you might say. We really found you by chance."

On foot, we fanned out, walking toward the mesa, shouting, "Robinson!"

Rocks & sage underfoot, then dropping, the steep bank of a deep winding wash. We headed back to the vehicles.

"Probably he could hear us if he was around here," Eddie said. "Our voices probably carried to the mesa. Ahead are some houses where Robinson could take shelter. Let's go beyond them & look some more."

We climbed back in the trucks, & rode past the scattering of little houses & fences. Then the 2nd truck got stuck in a sand drift. We pushed it out, & went on. Now a 3rd vehicle was following. We saw its lights in the mirrors, bouncing. When we stopped, everyone got out of their vehicles—3 from the 3rd.

One, a tall fellow, burst out, "All right, longhairs! Line up against the truck! Hands up! No Yabache dance tonight! No fire dance! No fire water! No women! Break it up! Go home!"

He flashed a light in our eyes.

After he pulled the light out of my eyes, I focused on his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face. It was Wilhelm, the 3rd grade teacher. He'd been at the school 5 years.

"No need to go lookin fer him!" Wilhelm said. He was bouncing up & down with nervous energy, & spitting snuff & saliva. "Just call, 'Snuff!' & he'll come runnin'!"

There were a couple of short-lived smiles. Then some information. The Audio-Visual man had driven ahead with the 3rd grade teacher, John Nelson—to the boy's house. Maybe he was already there.

Then I realized that no one had checked at the house & returned with the news that he wasn't there, ever. It was probably news to everybody but maybe Eddie.

Then we saw a car's beams, along the base of the mesa.

"Who's that?"

"Maybe they visited those houses we passed. Let's meet them."

We got into the vehicles & arrived at a fork at the same time the vehicle from the mesa did.

It was 3 young women: the elementary gym teacher, the elementary counselor, & the middle school music teacher. I never saw them during the day. I peered in thru the windshield at their faces & necks.

"Did you visit those houses?"

"Yes."

"What did they know?"

"Nothing."

There was some shivering. It was the coldest night of the fall. It was beginning to feel like winter.

Then, up ahead, bouncing lights, approaching.

The Audio-Visual man & the 3rd grade teacher bounced up in a big GSA station wagon, & stopped.

"What did you find out?"

"Robinson's home."

Someone said, "He probably caught a ride."

We headed back. Eddie got to talking about medicine. He told me first about the prayer stick carried like a scepter by a man on a galloping horse, to the place of the ceremony.

"It is used in a ceremony for a person who is out of harmony. This person doesn't wash, or eat with anybody else, or socialize—in any way. This person just sits & lies around getting closer to the Great Spirit. Then, after 4 days, he bathes in a liquid brew of herbs picked by the medicine man. This person also drinks the liquid."

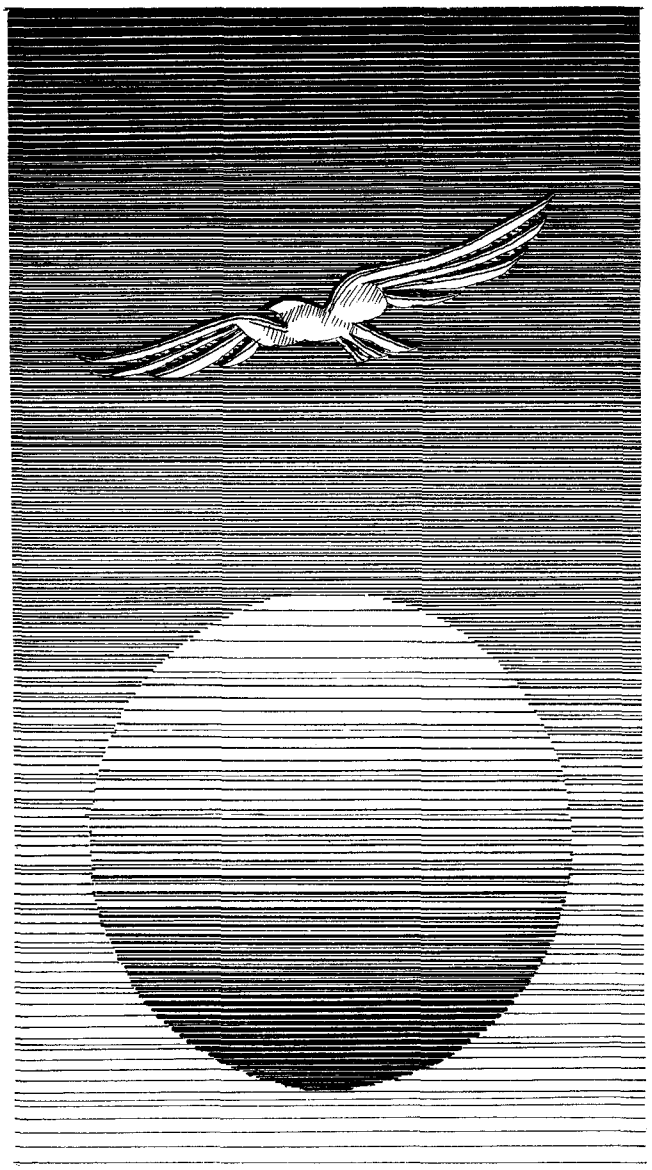
He sensed that I was impressed, & continued:

"I have an uncle up there," he said, pouting & jerking his head up, & to the left, at the mesa. "He has taught his horses to move like humming birds. He uses humming bird feathers. And those horses are fast. Those horses are really alive. I have ridden them.

"Sometimes, a baby is rubbed all over, with ashes. This is rarely done. Sometimes blue bird feathers are dropped on embers of coal. Babies inhale the smoke. Bluebirds—bluejays—some kind of blue bird. I don't know the English. These birds sing a lot. This causes the child to be gifted through the throat.

"There is an herb that will make an infant large, also."

ERIC CHAET was at one time a math teacher on a Navajo reservation. If any reader knows his present address, the editors would be pleased to have it.



Eddie let me off in front of the house I lived in. Frank wasn't back yet. I sat in the rocking chair & drank a little rye, the last of it.

The clock, which was always fast, sometimes as much as an hour, said it was 11:30. At 8:15 I had to explain square root computation to a bunch of students. The 4th day in a row on square roots. It was difficult for them, because most had only vaguely memorized the multiplication tables, at some point in the past, with some teacher whose name had been dropped from speech.

I turned off the heat, put on my long underwear, played a song on the guitar, flicked out the light, & climbed into my sleeping bag.

I got to thinking about glasses & women I'd lost in various places & times, & wondering about women & sights to come.

Between each 2 numbers is an interval. It is not necessary to teach that to students. Everybody sees it right away.

It was some time before I slept. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert F. Gish / Thomas J. Remington

Respect for the Dead

Native Americans: 500 Years After, by Joseph C. Farber and Michael Dorris. Crowell. $14.95

Plains Indian Mythology, by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. Crowell. $7.95

Moon of Popping Trees, by Rex Alan Smith. Reader's Digest/ Crowell. $9.95

The Plains Apache, by John Upton Terrell. Crowell. $7.95

Robert Altman's Sitting Bull defines history as "nothing more than disrespect for the dead." It is a "savage" quip in a film which should once and for all assure the popular mind in America that Buffalo Bill's defunct. The question now becomes how can the West itself survive as we have come to know it through popular history (history once held as reliable as the Western handshake and a man's word)? Moreover, should it survive? With parodists like Altman, Arthur Kopit, and Mel Brooks now counting coups, what is to become of all our handsome heroes who won the West at what now begins to seem too great a loss? But the vanishing American, as Leslie Fiedler once suggested, is returning and in the process our history lesson turns respect for selective dead to disrespect, progress to ecological funk, and Indians to Native Americans.

There is cause for concern when we see Buffalo Bill, played off in our clearing minds against Vietnam, Watergate, and July 4, 1976, vamping in front of Annie Oakley in a no-business-likeshow-business strut, refusing Sitting Bull's version of the Battle of Little Big Horn because, as Bill's muddledom would have it, "I've got a better sense of history than that." It is enough to drive one to books, history books, for the real story. And now is the time for such pursuit, according to historian Francis Paul Prucha in the May 24, 1976 *Chronicle of Higher Education:* "No comparable period in American historiography . . . can equal the past half-dozen years in productive scholarship in Indian history." Histories are now being written about Indians and about whites and about Indian-white relationships, the claim is, with a greater sense of proportion and fairness; no longer the one-sided red-is-bad, white-is-good, biased, European perspective of "They are different. They are 'Indians.' "

The four books considered here do strive for objectivity in their attitudes toward Native Americans today (*Native Americans: 500 Years After*), at the turn of the century (*Moon of Popping Trees*), during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (*The Plains Apache*), and outside of time (*Plains Indian Mythology*). Even so, when it comes to momentarily holding historical truth up to analysis on the printed page, objectivity is seen in many shapes and hues; and well-intended objectivity is not synonymous with authenticity. For some, objectivity is welcoming Native Americans into our national melting pot; for others it is the maintenance of tribalism. Furthermore, a significant distinction remains between what is written (or told) *by* Indians, and what is written *about* Indians by non-Indians. Such a distinction and the question of tribal and individual identity, for this reader at least, stalks these books page by page.

Joseph C. Farber and Michael Dorris attempt through pictorial essay and written exposition, respectively, to show that 500 years and much anguish after Columbus, Native Americans have survived and should continue to survive attempts to take away their land and their individual identity. Just as America is as topographically diverse as the Southwest, the Northeast, the Lakes, the Plains, the Southeast, the Far West, and Alaska, so are the tribes and cultures of Native Americans. Taking each of these regions as they reflect the relationships between people and land, all of which contribute in pictures of sublimity and squalor to definite and distinctive senses of place, Farber in particular shows us how diverse is the experience of the peoples Columbus grouped as Indians—peoples thereafter too easily stereotyped and categorized as all alike, savage, "others."

Even 500 years later there is still something of the lure of the primitive in these pictures of contemporary Native Americans—something that seems much more appealing than the trappings of civilization; it is sensed most strongly in pictures of an Eskimo whaling camp off Point Barrow, a Navajo sheep camp in Canyon de Chelly, or in the austerely beautiful earth mound and adjacent ladder leading down to the secrets of a kiva at Picuris pueblo. Here are intimations of sights beyond the limits of photography, or for that matter, words. In more than one setting, Farber captures the intuitively sublime language which landscape communicates to the human soul.

Not all of today's Native American environment, however, is sublime landscape reflecting the lure of the primitive. Native American environment today is also work as an auto mechanic, insensibility on a sidewalk under signs of "Coors" and "Cabin Still"; the flag-draped casket of Lawrence Two Eagle, killed (in spite of his name) in Vietnam; Indian youngsters reading a sign marking in enamel words the legacy of Wounded Knee; a woman doing precious (or curio?) beadwork behind the counter at a Seminole reservation store. Ultimately, it is the need to recapture the spiritual relationship to land, discarding the wretchedness and poverty linked to land's misuse, that surfaces from the pictures in this book—along with the resurgence of effort to maintain tribal and regional uniqueness amidst pressures and promises of assimilation. It is a voyage of rediscovery of much greater significance, one feels, than that first discovery voyage of Columbus. And the irony is that what presumably was once an unconscious attitude now must somehow—staged in part through books like

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this—deliberately be restored and called to attention.

In his search for what happened at Wounded Knee the first time (1890), a search that began during the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, Rex Alan Smith attempts to restore proportion as he sees it and unload the dice of authorial bias in a game which he acknowledges is traditionally rigged. "We soon discover," says Smith, "that although the Indians and whites were poles apart in their cultural codes, they were identical in their common humanity, and that each race contained about the same mix of virtue and vice as the other." Seeing things in a somewhat different light than Farber and Dorris, Smith's history lesson would realize that each version of truth in the history of the American Indian is right, given each side's understanding of right; this done, in Smith's somewhat syrupy phrasing, "the easier it will be for us to walk in each other's moccasins, and to see ourselves as *people* first, and as Indians or non-Indians second." This assumption leads to some misalignment of cause and effect in Smith's telling of what becomes *his* version of what actually happened.

For Smith, the tragedy of Wounded Knee was inevitable, an effect in a sequence of predestined events which "began at the door of the first factory of the Industrial Age—an age that was to be the doom of nomadic hunting cultures everywhere." The prophet Wovoka, the Messiah of the West, and the dream of the Ghost Dance which would restore the lost hunting grounds and an idyllic world without whites, are seen as forces larger than Custer or Sitting Bull or General Miles, or Colonel Forsyth, or Buffalo Bill Cody. But seeing how large the elements of chance, personality, and yellow journalism loom in the plot of the saga of Wounded Knee, it is still hard to believe that things could not have been otherwise.

* * *

The amount of narration, description, and dialogue in *Moon of Popping Trees*, plus a penchant for metaphor (note the title, which in terms of the Sioux calendar is December, the month of the Wounded Knee deaths), makes for history which comes closer to that special truth of fiction, i.e., truth combined with beauty, that Native American novelists like James Welch and N. Scott Momaday contribute to our understanding of American Indian experiences. Take this description of December 29, 1890: "It was a day so gentle and clear that the distant brown hills looked as warm and soft as rumpled deerskin, and it was so still that the faraway sounds could be heard clearly, and the thin brown haze of smoke rising from Mousseau's kitchen chimney stood straight as a sunflower stalk against the blue sky." Hardly history in the old textbook sense of the word.

This kind of impressionistic story telling is pleasurable reading and not without basis in researched "fact"; however, it is best considered a truth rather than the Truth. As intrusive narrator, too, Smith is everywhere arbitrating between Indian, non-Indian, and reader, making sure that everyone gets blamed and praised equally. In this regard, it is not the novelistic techniques that get tedious; quite the contrary. It is the nice-guy novelist disguised as historian referee which wears thin. The author's presence in orchestrating the scenes in retrospect and moralizing about them tend to make him too much the star, too much, like Buffalo Bill, the showman in charge of a cast of thousands. But for history as theater, *Moon of Popping Trees* is worth the price of admission.

* * *

Well-seasoned and more traditional historian of the American Indian, John Upton Terrell takes one back further in time to another stage and another act of the Native American story—to the arrival of Spanish missionaries and the wars of the Plains Apache, through the Apache and U.S. Cavalry skirmishes in the early nineteenth century. Here one realizes with a vengeance that history, like truth and beauty, resides in the eye of the beholder. Terrell incorporates a great deal of diary material from Spanish expedition sources, along with letters and government reports, into his account of what amounts to the decline and near demise of Apache culture in the *Llano Estacado* or what we know now as Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska.

The Jicarilla Apaches in northern New Mexico represent today the most visible tribe of a once much greater Apache population. Their legendary ferocity is amply documented by Terrell. But so is the savagery of the white victors, as given testimony in official accounts such as this trooper anecdote which relates the finding of an Indian child by an army patrol: "An old gruff soldier stepped up and said, 'Let me see that brat.' . . . He picked up a heavy stone, tied it to the board, dashed baby and all into the stream, and in a moment no trace of it was left. The soldier's only comment was, 'You're a little fellow now but will make a big Injun bye and bye. I only wish I had more to treat the same way.'" Throughout, Terrell does his moralizing in a light-handed way by presenting the sources and letting them more or less speak for themselves.

In *Plains Indian Mythology*, Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin attempt to organize the timeless truths of myth, legend, and folklore, as told by Apache, Pawnee, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and other Plains Indians, around the themes of "The Beginnings," "Little Stories: How and Why," "Horseback Days," and "Freedom's Ending." The sequence of stories concerning the trickster in the form of Old Man Coyote and Saynday are especially appealing, full of ironic applications to today. But the effect is one of an anthology without the artistry and sustained mythopoeic impact of Momaday's *Way to Rainy Mountain*. As in all anthologies, the mark of the editors is clearly present; and one can only indulge a bias and wish that the effort was solely Native American as in the collection of Zuni pueblo myths published as *Zunis: Self-Portrayals*.

In Momaday's book and Zuni Pueblo's own stories the individual's quest for identity within tribal heritage is much more keenly felt than in *Plains Indian Mythology*; however, the right impulse is here and thus positions this book closer to the kind of authenticity which, more than the other books reviewed here, will truly restore proportion and truth to the historiography of the American Indian—closer to books *by* and *about* Native Americans. One nevertheless wishes that more pages could be devoted to the myths and legends of one particular tribe than to those of Plains Indians collectively. In their "Epilogue," however, the editors' inclination toward Pan-Indianism is more directly stated. And if Pan-Indianism, or the setting of common humanity above race or tribe is to be given any credence or support, it is most suitably done in the transcendent, synchronic dimension of myth, fabulated history though it may be.

Hopefully Altman's Ned Buntline's assessment of Buffalo Bill's staging of history can never again apply to our written histories and historians of Native Americans: "He realized profits by telling lies before witnesses as if it was the truth." We recognize their comparably few faults, but Farber, Smith, Terrell, Marriott and Rachlin all point in the right direction. —*Robert F. Gish*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Muse of SF

Getting into Death and Other Stories, by Thomas M. Disch. Knopf. $7.95

The Wind's Twelve Quarters, by Ursula K. Le Guin. Harper and Row. $8.95

Capricorn Games, by Robert Silverberg. Random House. $6.95

Academics and critics interested in science fiction have taken a strongly bullish attitude toward the literary marketplace in recent years; our stock is rising and we grin like possums over each new dividend. In the bad old days a taste for science fiction was at best a midly interesting—if occasionally troublesome—peculiarity, something like being seven feet tall in the days before professional basketball. In the seventies, as enrollments declined and pressures on colleges to offer "popular" courses increased, a number of us academics found ourselves constrained—gladly or not—to learn and to teach "pop lit," including the various sub-generic forms thereof: Westerns, gothics, detective stories, and SF. Of these sub-genres, science fiction was (and is) easily the most popular on college campuses; naturally, academics already familiar with and sympathetic to SF have had an advantage thereby—thus the possum-like grins on our faces as we watch the numbers of forums and sessions devoted to science fiction multiply at scholarly literary conferences.

But the growing interest in science fiction in academic and literary circles goes rather beyond the popularity of the genre with college students. As academicians began to browse bemusedly through the garishly-illustrated volumes of the SF canon, many began to notice what others had earlier intimated: *some* science fiction had literary pretensions, and shared certain characteristic techniques with some varieties of contemporary surrealistic fiction.

In explaining what was happening in the world of SF during the sixties, Norman Spinrad explains much of what is behind the SF boomlet of the seventies:

> Linear, single-reality, here-and-now fiction was simply out of sync with the generational consciousness. . . . New writers . . .were drawn to the reading of all kinds of speculative fiction—William Burroughs to Theodore Sturgeon, Philip K. Dick to *E. C. Comics*, J. G. Ballard to Anthony Burgess—the fiction of the might-be, which cut across the arbitrary marketing definitions of "science fiction" and "mainstream." Naturally, when readers went on to become creators, they continued their interest and began to write speculative fiction. And found that almost all of it had to be published as "science fiction."
>
> —*Modern Science Fiction* (Anchor, 1974.)

What Spinrad's new writers of the sixities did, it turns out, was to use the SF field as a marketplace for wares they found difficult to peddle elsewhere, but it is important to emphasize that these wares' difficulties in the "regular" literary markets were not necessarily due to their being innately inferior products. At least in Spinrad's view, the works of the "new" SF writers were not different in *type* from those being purveyed by Barthelme, Pynchon, and Oates; whether or not they were different in *quality* is a separate question.

Spinrad himself was one of the "new" writers of the sixties who felt driven to the SF field by the lack of saleability of his work in the ordinary marketplaces. Another was Barry Malzberg, who recently offered his own explanation for his entry into science fiction in "Rage, Pain, Alienation and other Aspects of the Writing of Science Fiction," an article in the April, 1976, issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*:

> I realized by June of 1965 that it would be impossible for me to make a career in what was my field of choice: as a literary writer. The quarterlies were impenetrable, the coteries omnipresent, the competition murderous, the stultifying control of the publishing houses' literary editors absolute. If I was ever going to achieve outlet as a writer of fiction, I saw I would have to go to the commercial markets, the mass or genre markets that is to say, and while partially converting myself to the strictures of category fiction *sneak in* my literary intentions.
>
> Science fiction was what I chose because from the outset science fiction seemed to be that field in which one could sell stories of modest literary intention with the least amount of slanting: one could, if one touched the base of stricture, be paid a living wage for somewhat ambitious work. Historically, the field has been open to new writers and approaches in a way that, say, the mystery never has been.

The non-realistic fictionists of the sixties had few outs. Some of them, like Barthelme and Kosinski, achieved a modicum of success and acceptance. Others, like Jonathan Baumbach and Ronald Sukenick, continue to pay both dues and (through Fiction Collective) part of the cost of publication for their own works. A third group, discouraged at the enormous amount of dues required for "serious" publication, found that SF offered a market for fiction in which the unconventional was not only saleable, but at least occasionally in real demand. The more prolific SF writers were able to support themselves *as writers*: they didn't necessarily need to subsidize their writing careers through other work.

Thus, SF did offer an opportunity for you to quit your job and become a full-time fiction writer—if you had the nerve, productivity, and determination to do so. And even if you didn't have the true grit to become a "full-time professional," SF offered a market wherein a reasonably literate experimental writer could be published—albeit without much remuneration.Ultimately, there is little differnce in the problems faced by serious writers who want serious attention—whether they be in or out of the SF ghetto. The SF writer may have the early advantage of easy publication, but when he seeks the attention of the literati, he has the same problems getting recognized as anyone else. Sukenick's words are to the point: "The success of one serious writer actually creates an audience for more of the same. . . . Competing schools of writing, instead of trying to obliterate one another as if there were a question of moral deviation involved should bend over backward to honor one another's point of view. After all, it's obvious that no particular school guarantees excellence or ensures the absence of mediocrity, and those surely are the only standards of final relevance."

One can also paraphrase Sukenick. No particular school, not even science fiction, guarantees mediocrity or ensures the absence of excellence. With that idea in mind, I would like to turn briefly to three recent collections of short stories, all three by authors who in one way or another have been connected with the SF field. The first of these, *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, is by an author whose career is on a steep rise. Born in 1929, Ursula K. Le Guin did not publish her first story until 1962. A series of respectable publications, including several novels, followed until, in 1969, *The Left Hand of Darkness* swept both major awards for SF excellence—the Hugo and the Nebula. She repeated the accomplishment with *The Dispossessed* in 1975, and became the only writer to have more than one novel so honored. Her abilities have forced some recogni-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion outside of the ghetto, and Robert Scholes devoted one-fourth of his most recent book, *Structural Fabulation*, to a consideration of her work. *The Wind's Twelve Quarters,* published late in 1975, is the first collection of her short stories. With the works arranged in roughly chronological order, the book offers an interesting perspective on Le Guin's career from 1962 to 1975. It also serves as an index of how works by a first-rate SF writer will stand up against critical reading.

Seven of her book's seventeen stories relate to frameworks Le Guin uses in her novels; though they clearly stand independently, they offer a reasonable sample of the kind of writing to be found in the longer works. All but one of the stories were first published in science fiction magazines or anthologies; the single exception was first printed in *Playboy* but has been frequently reprinted in SF anthologies.

Silverberg, at 40, is somewhat younger than Le Guin but began writing science fiction earlier than she did. In fact, his first story was published in 1953. However, even by his own admission he did little other than hack work prior to 1967 when he got religion and decided to be a "serious" SF writer. Since then he has been a frequent recipient of SF awards and accolades; though little known outside of SF, his reputation inside the ghetto would not fall far short of Le Guin's.

Unlike Le Guin's collection, Silverberg's *Capricorn Games* includes works from only the last three years of his career. Although all eight of the stories in *Capricorn Games* were originally published in SF anthologies, the publishers acknowledge Silverberg's 1975 "resignation" with a fence-straddling blurb which attempts to appeal to both the SF and the general audience: "A master's attempt to make unconventional use of the traditional subject matter of science fiction."

Thomas Disch, 36, was born in Des Moines—more or less midway between Silverberg's Brooklyn and Le Guin's Berkeley. Less well-known than either Silverberg or Le Guin within the SF field, his strengths as a writer of science fiction were generally recognized with the publication in 1965 of *The Genocides,* and his 1968 novel, *Camp Concentration,* marked him as a major figure. Exasperated with the problems and the commercialism of the SF field, Disch has, like Silverberg, "resigned" from writing science fiction, though he admits to still writing "a little" SF.

Disch's *Getting into Death and Other Stories,* however, is the volume among these three least closely allied with traditional science fiction, and the only one that includes work originally published in a magazine that does not regularly print SF, *Paris Review*.

* * *

Among these three, Le Guin alone has never attempted to eschew the title of "SF writer"; at the Denver convention where Silverberg and Harlan Ellison bemoaned their fates, she commented that she herself felt grateful to the field for offering a market when she could have found no other. In fact, Peter S. Prescott quoted her in *Newsweek* (December 22, 1975) fearing that "If science fiction becomes respectable, it may die." The comment seems odd, coming as it does from the writer who has done more than almost any other to bring respectability to SF. However, the attitude expressed in it is perhaps responsible for Le Guin's ability to escape some of the awkward self-consciousness in her fiction that occasionally besets the other two authors.

In "The Science Fiction Hall of Fame," for instance, Silverberg has his narrator state: "I am a walking mass of secondhand imagination. I am the flesh-and-blood personification of the Science Fiction Hall of Fame." Then, when the narrator later turns to describe another character as being like a figure in a work of SF, a parenthetical insertion is added: "If I said he reminded me of Stephen Dedalus or Raskolnikov or Julien Sorel, you would naturally need no further descriptions to know what I mean, but. . . ." A long description of the SF character follows. Disch's "The Master of the Milford Altarpiece" is replete with obscure references to actual writers of science fiction—James Sallis, John Sladek, and Samuel R. ("Chip") Delany—and alludes vaguely to such facts as the name of Sallis's child (Dylan) and that of Delany's wife (Marilyn Hacker, the poet). Le Guin's fiction avoids such stiffnesses, though she transgresses mightily in some overly-cute introductory comments to her stories: "I think I am definitely the most arboreal science fiction writer," she says, and adds that "It's all right for the rest of you who climbed down, and developed opposable thumbs, and erect posture, and all that. There's a few of us still up here swinging." It's enough to make me wish that she respected her stories as much as I do.

But such minor matters are forgiveable in the cases of Silverberg and Disch, and are not really worth noticing in that of Le Guin, since one buys her book to read her stories, not her comments on the stories. Finally, all three of these books are strong indications of the capabilities of at least some of the writers traditionally associated with SF. Moreover, all three share certain characteristics that make them typical of works by authors knowledgeable in science fiction and its techniques, and these characteristics contribute to the books' success rather than deterring from it.

For instance, one aspect of science fiction that has attracted considerable attention of late is the genre's potential for the reworking of mythological content. In Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires and More Slow," the sacrifice of the King of the Forest is worked out in Frazer-like detail as the story of the exploration of an unknown world by a group of isolated explorers unfolds. More humorously (and more self-consciously), Disch's "Apollo" retells a series of Greek myths in modern settings. In one, Apollo finds a drunken Marsyas playing piano in a Greenwich Village restaurant; annoyed as Marsyas' voice "chorus after vain chorus declared, in a diffident, soft-throated tenor, that he'd done it *his* way, he'd done it *his* way, he'd done it *his* way," Apollo orders Marsyas away from the piano and proceeds to offer his own interpretations of Schubert, "which surpassed even the high standard set by Fischer-Dieskau." The Muses, who run the restaurant, have little trouble recognizing Apollo as the winner, and help to hold Marsyas while Apollo flays him. When done, Apollo "insisted on having the anguished satyr sing 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco.' Then he and the Muses polished off sixteen pieces of their chocolate-chestnut cake. Gods can eat anything they like without ever getting full."

Silverberg, too, enjoys playing with myth, and with mythical interpretations of literature. In his "Breckenridge and the Continuum," the title character tells four auditors the story of "Oedipus King of Thieves." The story, as Breckenridge tells it, is a fantastic pastiche of Oedipus, Orpheus, Icarus, and Proserpina. At the conclusion, one of the listeners complains that "What we've just heard is a mass of random floating fragments. I see the semblance of myth but not the inner truth." But another auditor, with all the aplomb of Lèvi-Strauss, responds that "A myth holds truth, . . . no matter how garbled its form, no matter how many irrelevant interpolations have entered it. . . . The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strength of a myth lies in its content, not in the melody of its telling. I sense the inherent power of tonight's tale." Later, in the mode of Barthelme in *Snow White*, Silverberg interrupts his story to offer a structural explanation of the story being told.

But beyond mythology, which is perhaps only an accidental component of much modern science fiction, these stories share one significant characteristic which seems to me to be typical of good science fiction, but difficult to achieve outside of SF. This is the ability to entice the reader into what seems a realistic series of examples which then blend into the fantastic, but so gradually that it is difficult to determine where the realistic ends and the fantastic begins.

Disch uses this technique in "Let Us Quickly Hasten to the Gate of Ivory," wherein a realistically-portrayed brother and sister enter the cemetery where their parents have been buried. Commenting on the enormous size of the cemetery, they begin to search for their parents' grave marker, only to become lost. As the story progresses, they become more and more isolated until, forced to recognize that they will never find their way out, they fall asleep in each other's arm—reminiscent of "Babes in the Wood," but also of their incestuous childhood.

Silverberg blends the real with the fantastic for startling effects in "Ms. Found in an Abandoned Time Machine." A collection of actual events are interspersed in the story with the completely fantastic. Thus, testimony from the Army investigation into the My Lai massacre is juxtaposed with an Indian attack on Washington with H-bombs; terrorist bombings in Northern Ireland are balanced with a successful pacifist plot to sink the Pentagon into a lake of muddy goo. And at the end of the story, the narrator, having converted Richard Nixon into a new leftist, says "If it could only be that easy. . . . But it doesn't work like that. How was I able to trick you into a suspension of disbelief?. . . I'll tell you what I really am, me, Thomas C—. I'm a bunch of symbols on a piece of paper. I'm just something abstract trapped within a mere fiction. A 'hero' in a 'story'." The superfictional technique itself, of course, is not startling. But what makes it especially effective in Silverberg's setting is that we *are* tricked at times into suspending our disbelief, since the strangenesses of the story seem somehow acceptable in a "Ms. Found in an Abandoned Time Machine."

In one short paragraph, Le Guin gives this technique of blending the fantastic with the real its full play; one finds oneself asking which of the statements are true, which are untrue but possible, and which are absurd. The difficulty of deciding points up the incomprehensibility of the world in which we live:

> In Zambia men are rolling down hills inside barrels as training for space flight. Israel and Egypt have defoliated each other's deserts. The *Reader's Digest* has bought a controlling interest in theUnited States of America-General Mills combine. The population of the Earth is increasing by thirty billion every Thursday. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis will marry Mao Tse-Tung on Saturday, in search of security; and Russia has contaminated Mars with bread mold.

Finally, all three writers are capable of reversing these effects. Each one can take the fantastic and make it seem humdrum—thus forcing our introspection into the kinds of lives we lead where, as in Silverberg's "The Science Fiction Hall of Fame," one can be distracted from the first moon landing by a casual sexual relationship, watch the replay on the eleven o'clock news, and still feel nothing. In Le Guin's "The Field of Vision," an astronaut returns from Mars, having seen God revealed through an artifact left by ancient missionaries to our solar system. And having seen God, the astronaut finds the whole process unbearable. "They can keep their God," he screams, "they can keep their Light. I want the world back. I want questions, not the answer. I want my own life back, and my own death!" He subsequently kills himself.

Disch has the most fun with this technique in "Death and the Single Girl," a story in which the protagonist, bored with her life, calls Death on the phone, having been given the number by an old boy friend. She only gets the answering service, but eventually she is able to make an appointment with death in her apartment. After spending considerable time straightening the place up, she greets Death, only to find that he expects her to perform an act of fellatio on him. "It's tit for tat," he says, "I come, and you go." Unfortunately, Death is impotent; eventually, he hires the protagonist to replace his office receptionist, who has quit in disgust. The story ends with this summary of modern life:

> That it was life could not be denied, but there were compensations. The salary was good, the hours agreeable, and her relationship with her employer—once it was clear that her service would be strictly limited to only such tasks as the New York State Employment Board would have approved—coolly congenial. In any case, Death did not seem eager to resume their earlier intimacies. It was a job, and she did it. If you couldn't be dead, this was the next best thing.

—Thomas J. Remington

SHORTER NOTICES:

The Uses of Enchantment, by Bruno Bettelheim. Knopf. $12.50

Sub-titled *The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales,* this is as absorbing a book of and about literature as we have ever opened. Dr. Bettelheim's professional concerns are with children—especially autistic children—and with their emotional and psychic healing. To the extent that he sees fairy tales as mediating between a child's inner and outer lives, we are told a great deal about the risks and difficulties of being young in an adult environment. To the extent that he is a psychological critic, we are given a number of important perceptions about tales whose value is frequently seen as mere entertainment. Hopefully some of our society's educationists will heed Bettelheim's criticisms of the way reading is taught in the public schools, our teachers will reassess their notions about the child mind, and our censors will realize how ill they serve the intellect by gutting literary materials.

The Nazi Drawings, by Mauricio Lasansky. University of Iowa. $14.95

This is a somewhat updated (it includes a drawing not among the original 29) edition of the catalog which accompanied the 1967 tour of Lasansky's macabre recapitulation of the Death Camp atmosphere. Done on coarse papers in pencil and drab crayons, sometimes using collage techniques, the drawings are both magnificent and repellent—emaciated bodies, gaunt faces, excruciating postures, played against the brute arrogance of the captors. This edition is excellent, the colors true, the detail fine; only the impact of the size of the originals is (unavoidably) sacrificed. A description and discussion by Edwin Honig prefaces the drawings. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brief Poetry Notices

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ = Remarkable ☆ ☆ = Average

☆ ☆ ☆ = Fine Work ☆ = Dull Stuff

The Bristle Cone Pine and Other Poems, by Sheila Cudahy. Harcourt. $5.95.

½

A collage of post-Plath poems on all the "right" subjects—the condition of women, self-hate, death, guilt, and fathers—which makes the fatal assumption that relevant poets need not shape experience in form and image.

Come The Sweet By and By, by Eleanor Lerman. Massachusetts. $7.00

☆

The structure of the poems, not the content, is surreal in this first recipient of the Juniper Prize for poetry. Lerman professes to be writing about survival but seems more concerned with celebrating one metaphor after another, her context thinning out until we get a book of songs without the accompanying music.

Pleasure Seeker's Guide, by Judith Leet. Houghton Mifflin New Poetry Series. $6.95 cloth; $3.95 paper.

☆

Another inexplicable choice for a first book in a new poetry series. There is a persona and a genuine cast of characters here, yet the language is so flaccid and self-indulgent that—horror of horrors—we'd like to recommend to the author even a mail-order course in creative writing.

Climbing into the Roots, by Reg Saner. Harper & Row. $7.95.

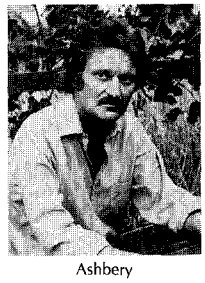
☆ ☆ ½

This first winner of the Academy of American Poet's Walt Whitman Award is capable of vigorous poems in the open air whose language and syntax recall Gary Snyder. A lack of variety and scope, though, suggest Saner would do well to telephone Snyder-the-Guru for a little lesson in vision.

In Lieu of Mecca, by Jim Lindsey. Pittsburgh. $2.95.

½

In Lieu of Poetry might be an apter title for this collection of adolescent adventures which might appeal to today's preteens who missed *Easy Rider* in the '60s. One of the weakest poetry books this press has ever published.



Ashbery

Booth

The Creek, by Victor Depta. Ohio University Press. $5.50.

☆ ☆

Poems humorously moving and uniformly competent in their concern with the immediate experiences of nature and family. Depta's prose poem stanza unfortunately flattens out his voice whenever he tries to lower or raise it, and no one poem here is finally more memorable than any other.

The New Body, by James Moore. Pittsburgh. $2.95.

☆ ☆ ☆ ½

At last: a first volume that takes real risks and, in general, surmounts them. Moore is warm, personal, funny, apocalyptic in moments, yet very much his own man-speaking-to-men.

Snow on Snow, by Maura Stanton. Yale. $1.95 paper; $6.00 cloth.

☆ ☆ ☆ ½

The Yale Younger Poets Selection for 1974 published in 1975. Tensely formulated poems of complex metaphor at once metaphysical and dream-like. There is, in Stanton's words a "tumult of perception" here; the result, ultimately, is not explosive but contained.

The House on Marshland, by Louise Glück. Ecco. $6.95.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

A brilliant second book, luminous and dark, graceful and accomplished. Glück's speaker is cool and solitary, but she whispers to us with such precision and supreme self-confidence that each poem emerges fragile and perfect as if the product of a glassblower's art.

1933, by Philip Levine. Atheneum. $3.95.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Superbly human elegies which bring their dead to life in the craft of a man alive in his own time. Some poems here have the simplicity of words written into stone. One of the most moving and accomplished books of poetry in the last decade.

---

45 Mercy Street, by Anne Sexton, edited by Linda Gray Sexton. Houghton Mifflin. $3.95.

☆ ☆ ½

This, the last completed manuscript Anne Sexton left, will be *de rigueur* for all her fans devoted to the particular brand of mental suffering which made her famous. Significant as Sexton was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and is, this book shows too clearly how emotionally indulgent and repetitious are the last rites of confessional poetry. Had she lived, Sexton would no doubt have revised and edited out a number of the poems here.

---

how i got ovah, by Carolyn M. Rodgers. Anchor/Doubleday. $3.95 paper; $5.95 cloth.

☆ ☆

Being Black and female is the subject of Rodgers' genuine attempt to connect with her audience, be they any color or sex. The poems are really intended for oral delivery, and though some lend themselves to performance by the reader, many lack imagistic and rhythmical interest on the page.

Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror, by John Ashbery. Viking. $5.95.

☆ ☆ ☆

Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, the NBA and the Pulitzer this year. Is it deserving? Yes and no; it is exquisite in its use of language, of words as reflective lenses of self-worlds, of syntax as homage to the possibilities of literary *ars gratia artis*, and also it is one reason—along with the work of several other New York City-based poets—that the common folk stop reading poetry at the age of 11. There are, of course, more reasons than one.

Bloodlines, by Charles Wright. Wesleyan. $3.95.

☆ ☆ ☆

Hermetic and abstract, the imagery rich in associations, this is almost pure poetry in Poe's sense. The major sequence here is fragments of a metaphorical life stripped of referential context; it is followed by footnotes which frame each poem in place and time. A fascinating, if sometimes unassailable, volume.

Available Light, by Philip Booth, Viking. $5.95.

☆

Booth's poetry has not always been prose, but in this most recent volume of his work he has achieved an almost unbroken prosiness—language that's flat, solemn, adjectival, plain dull. Eugene McCarthy provides a jacket blurb which is just ambiguous enough to be construed as politic praise □

"I really didn't enjoy it."

—Janet Brown, Brookline, MA

"I enjoyed it immensely. There is something of a sensibility akin to Grace Paley's at times. The authority of the prose is extraordinary."

—Arnold Krupat, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville

"I find it fascinating."

—Len Webster, West Midlands, England

"Personally, I can say that I could have written half of your book, not because I have your talent, but only because I feel, think and believe almost everything you have put into words so beautifully."

—Ginette Cassara, New York

"I was captivated."

—Edith Fels, Philadelphia

"Only thing I objected to was the difficulty I had keeping the haphazardly introduced characters straight. But even here some came out beautifully developed. All in all, I must admit you are a writer of considerable talent."

—Morris K. Jacobson, Rockaway, NY

"Its intricate structure and delicate texture made rigorous and delightful reading."

—David Wing, El Cajon, CA

"It wasn't fun and games. I can see how lots of people wouldn't understand it. It was very intelligent, and most people aren't."

—Diane Steen, Seattle

❀

I THINK
I MAY PAINT
THE HOUSE
IN AUGUST

Innovative fiction.

❀

Want to read it?

Send check or money order, $5.95 hardcover or $2.95 softcover, plus 60 cents for packaging and mailing, and I'll send it to you.

VICKY DRAHAM
3712 Sunset Beach N.W.
Olympia, Washington 98502

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JACK MYERS

THE NEW REALISM

A thin electronic tone wakes up inside my head.
Either I'm bionic or it's a signal that my brain is dead.
Maybe God placed his finger on the Moog
and played one heraldic note stretching like a leash
between birth and death which will dissolve like us
and drift off with the indifference of a dotted line.

Then sounds will come to me like magi on four feet
cocking their heads, saying they are the dead center
now, not me; that I should step from the distraction
I call myself, open my mouth and let the gasses
of silence thin out and rise through the universe
so that my emptiness inside it rarefies.

Whirling away, I will not speak again. My face won't be
a wild guess. I'll know a dog barking in the distance
barks in the distance until death makes a fist;
that when the dog stopped he went on barking silence
because I, as his inhabitant, am in my place.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lawrence Sturhahn

Festival

Last year the opening press conference of the 19th Annual San Francisco International Film Festival was held in the estimable Mark Hopkins Hotel's *Room of the Dons*. Wood panelled, with tall windows through whose white curtains a bright light diffuses, the head table, facing the rows of folding chairs, is on a platform at one end. There's a green baize cloth covering it, and on that are two microphones which don't function. On the floor is a thick red rug with a black diamond pattern. A handsome room it is; above the windows, along the top third of the walls, is a mural, romantic *1930s Modern* heroic figures rendered with naturalistic detail. They're reminiscent of illustrations by Peter Hurd and N. C. Wyeth in Scribner's Illustrated Classics I read as a boy. *King Arthur . . . The Story of Roland . . .* already it's nostalgic. Up there on the wall are Friars, *Conquistadores*, Chinese, *Californios*, Indians, interspersed with half naked ladies—also heroic—with dynamite breasts. This is a depiction of a history of the *Golden Land*—a metaphor? It's fantastic, three months before the Bicentennial year is to begin.

Though in California, it seems, a bicentennial is less important. In spite of the theory, the history of the country, of the North American continent, is why—along the coast—the state is what it is, a place of idea and idiocy, of fads and flash. Baking in the central valley—the *San Joaquin* and in Fresno and Bakersfield—you might as well be in Nebraska or Kansas. But as time goes on it becomes more and more difficult to be critical of anything (be it non-exploitive) which was invented as some kind of an answer to the modern condition. The longer we go, this past couple of years, the more fragile becomes the structure of our support, the more there is to answer (for and to). Already some of the questions are too big. The point is not the goodness or badness of either Rosicrucians, EST or Transactional Analysis, Disneyland, hang gliding, Hollywood or surfing, but that it proliferates.

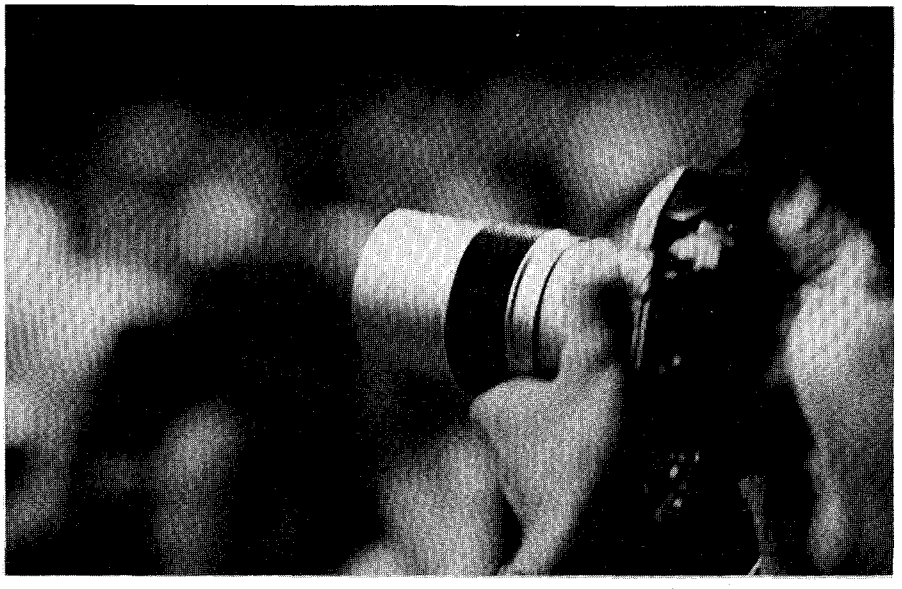
Which goes back to the kind of people that came to settle the North American continent, most of them either ambitious, dissident, or indentured. Many malcontents of many sorts, too restless or fanciful to put down roots, if the first place they settled proved inhospitable there was always an option to move on, to emigrate, to pioneer. Each area, from Tennessee and Ohio to the great plains and the high plateau, winnowed out the more satisfiable—left the restless, eager, anxious, mis-fitted moving on. Until, across the high boundary of the Sierra, they were stopped by the sea, (so) where the sun shines and soil is fertile, ideas (and lettuce and oranges and grapes) and craziness grow.

* * *

In the *Room of the Dons*, that first day, the press sitting in attendance, a meagre thirty-eight or forty are taking notes, using mini-machines to record the facts:

> . . . there will be seventeen American and two world premieres, twenty-six new features from fourteen countries and the largest number of tributes they have had for five years, and of course the television film competition, the film as communication competition and. . . .

There's information about people on the staff who get a salary: the Associate Director for Tributes, the two Activities Directors, the film coördinator, the doormen, projectionists, box-office people, program editor, designer of the program and lobby displays. And those who don't: freebies are *not* paid, and without them the festival wouldn't fly. Ushers . . . Phone Answerers . . . Hostesses . . . Press Room Assistants . . . Drivers . . . for its eleven day duration one hundred forty people are working on it. Catering the sandwiches, serving coffee, cold drinks, and wine will be Delancey Street Foundation; ushers are coördinated by the local chapter of The-Women-of-the-Motion-Picture-Industry. Press will be coming in from everywhere, give or take one hundred twenty of them, which is part of the problem. In the theatre at the Palace



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Fine Arts there are only ninety allotted seats, so not everybody gets a ticket to everything, and there's some prestige involved in who gets to see what. Stringing for the *Times* (New York) is better than being main-man for the *Times* (Contra Costa), for sure.

"Speak louder, Mark!"

"We can't hear a damn thing."

* * *

As the microphones on the green baize covered table don't work, it's explained they're there for the next meeting in the room. Beyond the sixth row much of what was said was hard to hear. A coffee service by the door, no ration of cake.

But at the opening night party they fed *Barons of Beef* to nine hundred at fifty dollars a head. As you came in the side door of the Hyatt Regency—after the ceremonies and the screening at the theatre on the opposite side of the city—waiters offered a choice of drinks from trays. It was a good party with the band that plays regularly at the Mark, good enough to get off on, and the *Barons* were delicious. One of the organizing ladies said that her priorities—and where there's scarcity (money) you must have priorities—were towards food over decorations. "People really go for the Barons!" she said. And there was a rumor late in the serving that they were running out. Momentary as the panic was, it was also real. As for the decorations, would you believe that the centerpieces from all ninety tables—small incandescent flares—were ripped off. People who paid fifty dollars for the *Barons* and the flash walking out with nickel flares under their coats. Fifty times nine hundred is forty-five thousand gross. How much for the band and how many *Barons*, after that you have the net. At one-thirty the music stopped; it took twenty minutes to get everybody out.

* * *

Festivals turn out to be spelled money too. Peckinpah, after shooting "Killer Elite" in San Francisco, gave thirty thousand. Twenty thousand came from Quinn Martin, producer of "The Streets of San Francisco." From the city, whose mayor then was Joseph Alioto (an ardent supporter) came twenty-five thousand. That's seventy-five toward the one hundred seventy-five that it costs to put on.

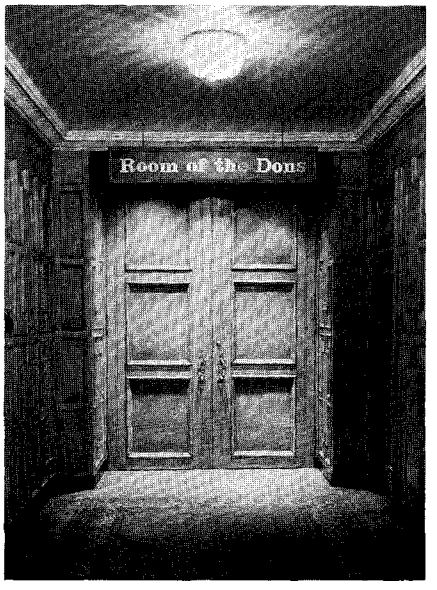
Movies are spelled money, as has been said. In the opening night gala premiere, "Hearts of the West," the movie is about money, a young man from the mid-west seeks his fortune by writing in the Hollywood of the 1930s. A pleasant comedy in the form of a farce, the movie aims an ironic eye at *the business*, at its cruelty as well as its charm, at the personalities as well as the artists. Lewis Tater, the young man, falls in with Sagebrush Productions, becomes a stuntman, almost a star, has his novel pirated—and finally triumphs. There's a crazy director, Kessler, played by Alan Arkin, who's magnificently absurd, and, as caricature, absolutely on. It's a charming film, and in the end, when Tater has triumphed, and the ambulance is pulling away, the end title music comes up:

". . . I'll see you in my dreams . . . "

Which, probably, is the only place anybody is going to see that film today.

* * *

Looking back—this is the year for that—at what's been seen, it seems too bad that "Hearts . . ." died. An entertaining film with good acting and a pleasant—not simplistic—story that



was absurdist in form, it was also, through the vehicle of farce and caricature, an incisive comment on the industry of which it was a product. Looked at—savored (as opposed to being flashed on, and mind blown)—there was both entertainment and idea in it.

After the years of "Jaws!" and "Taxi Driver," both of which exploit us with their image—doing what no other medium can do so well—blasting us into the shivery anticipation of horror, there have now been "Next Stop Greenwich Village" and "Ode to Billy Joe," small pictures which seemed real to me, or should I say I liked them better because their vision and mine—at this moment—coincide.

This year the box office is down from the highs of last, but the statistics do not include the beginning of summer when business is supposed to pick up.

* * *

Motion Picture Studio Mechanics, Local 52 (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Machine Operators of United States and Canada), with jurisdiction in New York, announced the publication of a directory of the membership. It's a sixty-three page booklet with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all active, inactive, and retired members, and is offered to the industry at large for the sum of $25.00.

* * *

There's a headline in *Variety* in April:

FILM PRODUCTION SLOWS DOWN!

Because the Independents, who now make more pictures than the Majors, are into exploitation (either sexual or sadistic), which pictures are limited for general release, the number of playdates (theatre bookings) because the general theatres have an audience that won't sit for it, and since the Majors are making fewer although bigger, and for much more, there will be a dearth of product for the family *nabes*. . . . Did you notice—do you have a *nabe*?

* * *

There's one producer, Richard Shepard, who doesn't think the quality of recent pictures is the best, which he blames on deal making. And Tony Bill talked about that a couple of years ago. A picture he produced didn't work, was never released, and it was because (he said) the actors and director got into it because it was a lark. Friends, they wanted to clown around for a while; now the problem proliferates. In Hollywood they're talking about it, how it's to blame for the above-the-line spiralling cost. But, worse, it's putting deals, personalities, manipulations, all ahead of concern for a good story, the solid film that the whole world's population will want to see.

* * *

You know, one thing I remember: watching Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire dance.

* * *

In the theatre at the Palace of Fine Arts is where the festival takes place. What I know about the building is that it, and the columns around the pool in front, date from the San Francisco Exposition of 1915. The entrance is under a marquee, past the ticket takers, and through glass doors into an enor-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mous room in the shape of a half moon. On opening night, coming in to see "Hearts of the West," and hear the tributes before it, the first-nighters are in formal clothes. A video crew is set up and waiting for celebrities. Someone said the governor's aide flew in and said the governor wants tickets for tonight. He wants to see a movie. It was that simple last October. Since then the governor has confirmed a populist image, tested himself in his sober puritan suit, and made a trial run for number one.

The enormous room fills. Francis Ford Coppola and his wife are there. Those responsible for the premiere film, Tony Bill (producer), Rob Thompson (writer), Howard Zief (director), Jeff Bridges (star). The Honorary Chairperson of it all, the Mayor, who has since gone. An effusive, boisterous, slick man. Obviously a consummate politician, he seemed flat to me . . . politicians . . . Watergate . . . ecchhh! Later, on the stage before the film, the old mayor sweeps the microphone off its stand and flourishes it as he makes Francis Ford Coppola a permanent member of the *St. Francis of Assisi Society*, presents him with a bronze sculpture of the saint.

"He's the very best thing that has happened to San Francisco in a generation," was the way the mayor put it, referring to Francis the man. "His creative genius radiates all over the United States."

Modestly, wearing a beautiful tuxedo with a red satin lining, standing with his wife on stage, with his poppa and momma too, Francis accepts the honor. "It's heavy," the mayor said, meaning the statue, not the sentiment, "we'll have somebody carry it out."

Francis is equally heavy. Probably the best of the young film directors, certainly the most talented filmmaker, the two epics (which he's now integrating into a ten hour tv show) are two of the best pictures (of their epic kind) ever made. And Francis now is involved in what sounds like another *situation* (what he's known for). Written by John Millius, "Apocalypse Now!" is an eleven million dollar Vietnam war epic. In a recent profile in *Atlantic* the question, raised by Francis himself, is why he has not made more of what he calls his personal films ("You're a Big Boy Now!" "The Rain People," "Conversation") and why they are not more of what he wanted them to be? The perennial artist's question it is, but underlying in tone is something less clear.

* * *

"As a filmmaker I want to believe that the films and subjects I deal with are relevant to the times I live in." So said Jeremy Paul Kagan, who wrote and directed "Katherine," a film made for television that was screened at the festival as part of New Directors Series. A film I keep writing about, it remains in memory among the best I've seen this year. Which may be because time and recent history is what the film is all about, tracing the radicalizing of a young upper-middle-class American woman —who is not Patricia Hearst, although the plot has superficial similarities. Socially, there *are* similarities.

"We were supposed to be the cream," Katherine's best friend says in the film, "the educated future wives and mothers of America, but we had no idea what we really wanted to do." From Peace Corps to SDS to Weatherman; from good girl in Walnut Creek to oppressed Central American Country to Ghetto School to Chicago Convention to underground to outlaw to dead. It's a parlor game of the past. In 1965 Lyndon Johnson was saying that "we believe everybody must some day be free," and he was ordering an Air-Mobile Division to Vietnam.

After 1968 it was not the same, but nobody knew until seventy-two. In Chicago the push went to shove, tear gas was in the air, and blood was in the streets.

* * *

> "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. It's clearly in the air. We will forecast the end of the system in blood. We are the weathermen —Seize the day! SEIZE THE DAY!"

On the stage at the Palace of Fine Arts theatre Kagan makes a distinction between the political acts of sabotage and terrorism—the former (a dim memory from three or four years ago) involving acts against property, the latter including people who are innocent, hostages, killing. . . . It is what we have inherited, and also what we create. Kagan is saying that back then the "actions"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Won't you give to:
RECORDING FOR THE BLIND, INC.
215 East 58th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

MOVING?

Send both your old and your new address to:

Subscription Department
The North American Review
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

NEW ADDRESS

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State..... Zip.....

OLD ADDRESS

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State..... Zip.....

created did not hold or focus the attention of the masses of Americans on those things which the Weathermen felt should be changed. It was, after all, "no prairie fire burning brightly, but a spark from a match that went out." And those years did something serious to that generation which was between sixteen and twenty in 1968.

"Katherine" is a very out-front statement about the socio-political system in the United States since 1965. And what is significant is that it was financed—costing slightly over 800,000—by television. "Television is not set up to accept controversy," Kagan said. "Advertisers don't want to deal with these kinds of subjects. It's said that everything we do on television is essentially leader between commercials."

But, the ratings were very high. Maybe Americans are interested? Anyway, the network executives must be pleased since that's one of the ways they judge the value of what they do. In spite of being uncomfortable with the film's subject matter, it should be understood, Kagan said, that, with some minor changes which did not emasculate the political story, they did put up the money to make it. And, hopefully, the high ratings presage more of the same.

* * *

"I read the script ('Doll House') but I couldn't find Nora. An old fashioned play in terms of the mechanisms that move the story—if you don't have the depth and penetration of the character of Nora, there isn't very much there. Joseph Losey—the director—would wear a women's liberation pin upside down as a joke. It was a bizarre experience. We were accused of being lesbians. Because we wanted more lines for the women we were a gaggle of bitches! There were signs on the camera like 'the only place for Cleopatra is on her back. . . .' Every day Losey would say, 'but it's old fashioned what Ibsen is talking about. The problems don't exist any more.' Meanwhile they were being played out on the set," she said.

"It was so long ago that the only thing I can remember about working on 'The Chase' was the one scene I had with Brando. It's a very strange experience because a lot of the time you can't focus on him. He even shoots with cotton in his ears so he won't pick up on other people's rhythms. I felt like I was acting all by myself. Until suddenly—there was a moment. And he was all there!" she said.

"Definitely—we need more women directors and actors. We need writers and producers too. Nothing is being written for women today. All the scripts that come my way are shallow, so I have to become a producer. Either that or give up acting. When because I'm an actress is why I don't go into politics myself. I ask myself if I'm a producer and I don't have the *chutzpah* to hire a woman director—who will?

"My head was under my arm when I did 'Barbarella,' " she said. "I can't even believe it. I know people who say it wasn't all that bad—but it *was*! It was! I was so self-conscious. It's no fun acting with birds, and dry ice, and ammonia! I mean I'm from the Actors' Studio and what was I doing in a studio in Rome with my clothes off, and this wing attached to my ribs? I hated it!

"I'm producing a film about the American revolution, an epic from the point of view of a middle class working family who don't support the idea in the beginning.

"I'm producing an original script about a paraplegic Vietnam veteran, a love story that takes place in 1968 in a hospital on a military base with a conservative woman who's married to an army officer.

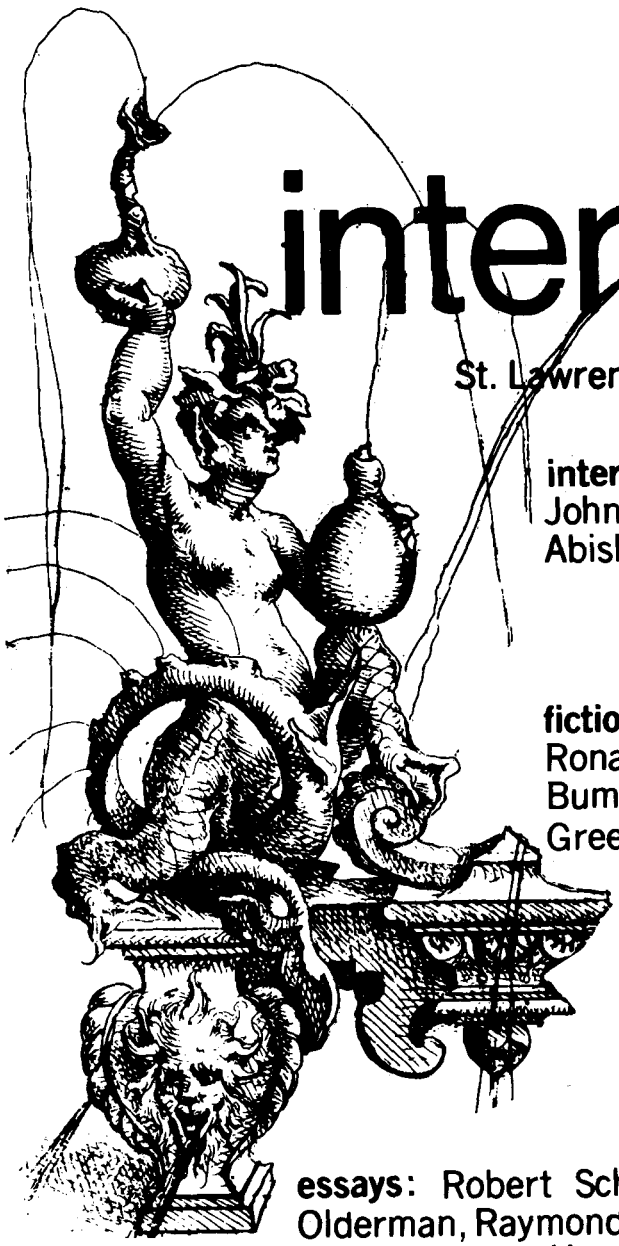
"I'm producing a film inspired by something that happened to a woman named Karen Silkwood, who worked in a fast breeder reactor in Oklahoma. She uncovered certain documents about certain materials fabricated in the plant; and she was killed."

In October, a year ago, she said all this. I hope that she proliferates. In the clips from her films I remember her playing hookers, losers, tramps. An actress, this Jane Fonda who sits so *assertive* in her chair; regard the angle of the jaw, the set of the hand. She's fantastic. Women could take lessons from her.

* * *

Last year it didn't rain on opening night. Whether anyone else in the whole world cares about such a fact, in San Francisco movie buffs and film freaks, waiting for the marathon of the festival, wait also for the rain which marks the advent of winter. Two years ago it rained on closing night; last year it was the night before closing. But, last year, it didn't go on, and now in California the reservoirs are getting down to the mud in the bottom. This year is the twentieth anniversary of the oldest film festival in the United States and along with that, again we're waiting for the rain. It just better start; it better go on; I have no hankering for the dry creek we're going to be up, otherwise. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



fiction international

St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617

interviews: Jerzy Kosinski, Ishmael Reed, John Gardner, Thomas McGuane, Walter Abish, Conrad Aiken . . .

fiction: Joyce Carol Oates, Rosellen Brown, Ronald Sukenick, Russell Banks, Jerry Bumpus, Walter Abish, David Madden, Alvin Greenberg, Dallas Wiebe, Robley Wilson, George Chambers, C. E. Poverman, Siv Cedering Fox, Gordon Weaver, Carol Berge, Arthur Vogelsang, Susan Holahan . . .

essays: Robert Scholes, Jerome Klinkowitz, Raymond M. Olderman, Raymond Federman, Clarence Major, Clark Blaise, G. E. Murray, Honore de Balzac, Maclin Bocock, Thomas LeClair . . .

Please enter my subscription for [ ] one year, $5.00, [ ] two years, $8.00, [ ] three years, $11.00. Pan American, add $.50 per year, foreign, add $1.00 per year.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I enclose $_____

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

If your airline can't offer you the NAR, ask the attendant what's up.

You can always get *Time, Newsweek, Holiday, Mademoiselle*—those mass circulation things everyone knows about—but no matter what airline you fly with, something's missing if the flight attendant can't provide you with *The North American Review*. We're class, not mass, with subscribers in all 50 states and 18 foreign countries. Ask for us every time you fly—and keep asking.

The North American Review

University of Northern Iowa Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED